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AFRICAN AMERICANS VS. AMERICAN JEWs

The Campus Intersectionality Craze
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# Commentary

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To the Editor:

SOHRAB AHMARI’s article on the transgender movement raises an important issue: how best to treat transgender patients (“The Disappearance of Desire: The transgender movement’s missing element,” April). Modern medical practice incorporates the principle that ethical treatment of patients requires an evidence base—that is, it requires factual information that a medical or surgical intervention will help more than it harms. Prospective, randomized, controlled clinical trials provide the highest-quality evidence. Expert consensus or opinion is considered the lowest quality, simply because experts without objective data have so often turned out to be wrong. Significantly, when medical or surgical societies compile practice guidelines, they now state the quality of evidence behind each of their recommendations.

The Endocrine Society—specialists in hormonal management—just issued its 2017 guidelines on the treatment of gender-dysphoric/gender-incongruent persons. The guidelines were co-sponsored by several other national and international medical societies. Unfortunately, nearly all of their recommendations are labeled as based on “low-quality” or “very low-quality” evidence. Many recommendations are “ungraded,” which is an even weaker evidential designation.

Transgender patients are at high risk for substance abuse, suicide attempts and suicide, sexually transmitted diseases, depression, low quality of life, and other problems. Without a high-quality evidence base, we cannot know how best to help them. One might think the opposite from the proliferation of transgender clinics at academic medical centers, where lots of medical and surgical treatments are administered, but little actual prospective controlled research is done. Such research is feasible, ethical, and could attract community buy-in, e.g., through the use of wait-listed control groups. It bears emphasizing that all of these hormonal and surgical interventions come with side effects.

I recently raised several of these points in a well-attended medical forum given by an openly transgender (male-to-female) physician who holds a prominent position in one of the state departments of health. In response, the speaker scoffed at my suggestion of clinical trials—and then misrepresented the evidence behind the Endocrine Society guidelines as “very strong”—which of course it cannot be in the absence of clinical trials.

Transgender patients, like all patients, deserve safe and effective evidence-based treatments. It remains to be seen if we can conduct essential clinical investigation in the dogmatic, activist environment described by Sohrab Ahmari. As the recent Endocrine Society guidelines show, the record to date is poor.

Kevin Jon Williams, M.D.
Wynnewood, Pennsylvania
To the Editor:

SOHRAB AHMARI'S article on the transgender movement was elucidating, informative, and well-researched. I applaud Ahmari's meticulous and scholarly approach to a highly delicate and controversial social issue. I did learn a lot by reading his essay.

I do, however, take exception to something that Ahmari wrote in the very last paragraph. Why did he bring up Donald Trump, who, as Ahmari wrote, “has little regard for the facts”? Why take a shot at our president?

JUAN GILBERTO QUEZADA
San Antonio, Texas

Sohrab Ahmari writes:

I THANK Kevin Jon Williams for his thoughtful and informative letter. Unfortunately, the bullying, the assault on basic scientific methods, and the flight from reason and evidence that he describes pervade all clinical disciplines that deal with the gender question, and not just endocrinology. The willingness of researchers and clinicians to go along—to allow activists to subvert the usual truth procedures of medicine and psychology—is a testament to the power of ideology to put highly trained experts under its spell.

As Dr. Williams rightly notes, the first victims of this ideological onslaught are transgender patients. The only solution on the horizon, as far as I can tell, is for more experts to find the courage to ask difficult questions and to speak scientific truth at these forums, as my correspondent commendably does.

Juan Gilberto Quezada misunderstands my purpose in alluding
to Donald Trump’s penchant for post-truth discourse (that the president has such a penchant is beyond dispute; my mind won’t soon forget then-candidate Trump’s ravings about Senator Cruz’s father’s role in the JFK assassination). But my larger point was to underscore the hypocrisy and bad faith of American elites and the prestige press, who constantly warn us about the dangers of a post-truth world, even as they insist that there is no biological basis to gender.

Marx and the Jews

To the Editor:

In his article “Karl Marx’s Jew-Hating Conspiracy Theory” (April), Jonah Goldberg makes considerable use—with full acknowledgment—of my book, The Mind and the Market: Capitalism in Western Thought, especially the chapter on Marx. There I argue, as Goldberg notes, that in many respects Marx’s critique and analysis of capitalism, premised upon the labor theory of value, reflected a much older belief that commerce in general and moneylending in particular were unproductive and parasitic, qualities that were often attributed to the Jews because of their association with usury (money-lending).

What I do not argue, but Goldberg does, is that “Karl Marx hated capitalism in no small part because he hated Jews.” Marx didn’t, and his most apposite work, “On the Question of the Jews,” was a critique of the notion put forward by fellow radicals such as Bruno Bauer that Jews should be denied equality of civil rights. To be sure, Marx’s purpose was less the defense of the Jews than the condemnation of capitalism. As my book notes, “Marx combined his moral critique of capitalism with traditional anti-Jewish images, not in order to bolster anti-Semitism but to blacken the moral standing of bourgeois society.... Marx embraces all the traditional negative characterizations of the Jew that were repeated by Bauer, and for good measure he adds a few of his own. But he does so in order to stigmatize market activity. For Marx’s strategy is to endorse every negative characterization of market activity that Christians associated with Jews, but to insist that those qualities have now come to characterize society as a whole, very much including Christians. The Christian tradition of stigmatizing Jews and the economic activities in which they engaged by virtue of their marginality now became a stick with which to beat bourgeois society.”

Goldberg’s notion that Marx’s theory was fundamentally a conspiracy theory is also misleading. As Marx put it in Capital (in a passage quoted in my book):

“Modern industry never views or treats the existing form of a production process as the definitive one. Its technical basis is therefore revolutionary, whereas all earlier modes of production were essentially conservative. By means of machinery, chemical processes and other methods, it is continually transforming not only the technical basis of production but also the functions of the workers and the social combinations of the labor process. At the same time, it thereby also revolutionizes the division of labor in society, and incessantly hurls masses of capital and of workers from one branch of production to another....[It] does away with all repose, all fixity and security as far as the worker’s life-situation is concerned.”

That is no conspiracy theory. And for all that Marx got wrong, he got some things right enough to be worth remembering, including by those who, like me, find many elements of his thought unsound.

Jerry Z. Muller
Silver Spring, Maryland

Jonah Goldberg writes:

I have learned a great deal from Jerry Z. Muller. Thus, my first instinct in any disagreement with him is to assume I am in error, as I consider him an authority on a great many things.

But upon reflection, and with no diminution of my respect and admiration for Muller, I think we’ll have to agree to disagree. I don’t think anyone can read Marx’s “On the Question of the Jews” in good faith and not come away from the effort thinking it is anything other than an anti-Semitic piece of work. Muller does not actually deny this. Rather, he concedes it in the process of arguing that Marx uses anti-Semitic language and concepts as a convenient way to attack capitalism. Even if I were to concede the point, this strikes me as a meager defense. According to Muller’s own account, Marx “endorsed” and reinforced anti-Semitic slurs merely as a “strategy,” but he wasn’t himself an anti-Semite? If Marx was not an
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anti-Semitic, this explanation would still find Marx guilty of a grotesque cynicism: exploiting and endorsing anti-Semitic stereotypes as a means to throw mud on capitalism.

The problem is that there is ample evidence that Marx's anti-Semitism was more than merely strategic. To cite just one of many examples, he referred to the German Jewish intellectual Ferdinand Lassalle as "Baron Izzy," describing him as a "Jewish nigger." Indeed, if anything, it was Marx's occasional support for Jewish causes that was strategic. In 1843, while in Cologne, he wrote a letter to Arnold Ruge recounting how, "Just now the president of the Israelites here has paid me a visit and asked me to help with a parliamentary petition on behalf of the Jews; and I agreed. However obnoxious I find the Israelite beliefs Bauer's view seems to me nevertheless to be too abstract. The point is to punch as many holes as possible in the Christian state."

It is surely true that Marx wasn't a practitioner of biological anti-Semitism, and that the temptation to impose Nazi notions of "the Jewish Question" onto Marx retroactively is unfair. After all, Marx was the descendant of rabbis on both sides of his family. But there are other kinds of anti-Semitism, and I'm convinced that Marx came to his hatred of capitalism, at least in part, via his hatred—or shame—of Jews. William Blanchard makes a powerful case in this regard in his essay "Karl Marx and the Jewish Question." Blanchard states that the "very origin of his antagonism to capitalism emerged from an earlier distaste for what he described as 'Jewish money-grubbing.'"

As for Muller's objection to the phrase "conspiracy theory," I take his point. But I do not think citing a single passage from Capital lets Marx off the hook. He does not dispute that Marx was indeed a conspiracy theorist, a point I illustrate in my essay. Nor does he dispute that Marxist theory lends itself to conspiracy theories about the way the ruling classes manipulate society to their own benefit, because, I suspect he would agree, that is irrefutable. Where we seem to disagree is on whether or not Marx's explanation of the progress of history stands apart from the psychological dispositions and temptations that characterized Marx's views and motivations away from the page. I agree we can learn much from reading Marx (though even more that is of use, I would argue, from reading Muller), but I remain convinced that the "science" of Marx's theories is downstream of more human drives. Many intellectuals insist, though few as passionately as Marx did, that their arguments are devoid of petty biases and agendas. In the case of Marx, I find those denials unpersuasive.

The Altalena

To the Editor: R

ABBIE Meir Y. Soloveichik justifiably praises Menachem Begin for his refusal to permit Irgun fighters to respond to targeted gunfire from Israeli soldiers during the disastrous Altalena confrontation ("The Moment That Made Israel a Nation," April). While noting that "a firefight did break out," he avoids assigning responsibility to the man who ordered it: Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. Dismissing the Irgun as "a gang of terrorists" who "usurped" state power by landing the Altalena (with his prior consent), Ben-Gurion was determined to stifle political opposition and (as Palmach commander Yigal Allon recounted) to "get Begin." That precipitated the tragedy of the Altalena confrontation, which cost the lives of 16 Irgun fighters devoted to the fledgling State of Israel.

JEROLD S. AUERBACH
Newton, Massachusetts

To the Editor: M

MEIR Y. Soloveichik's article brought tears to my eyes. I was reminded of how happy I was when Menachem Begin became the prime minister of the state he loved so much. He had deserved more recognition from David Ben-Gurion. But the Israeli people showed how they felt by electing him.

MURRAY RUBIN
Toronto, Canada

To the Editor:

ABBI Meir Y. Soloveichik's column about the Altalena resonated with me. Begin's naivété regarding Ben-Gurion is of less moment than his avoidance of killing Jews. Nor does the tale of Moses slaying 3,000 Jews refute that principle, since that exception regarded idolatry. Nevertheless, there is something of even greater import about Begin's naivété, namely his support of the Camp David Accords. Israel's interest in the pretense of peace through negotiations can spell her doom. Yet Jews have repeatedly denied their enemy's commitment to the destruction of Israel. And this denial has repeatedly been a detriment to the well-being of the Jewish state. Until Israelis acknowledge that the issue has never been peace but survival, all else falls to the wayside.

ALLEN WEINGARTEN
Monroe Township, New Jersey

To the Editor:

MEIR Y. Soloveichik's article brought tears to my eyes. I was reminded of how happy I was when Menachem Begin became the prime minister of the state he loved so much. He had deserved more recognition from David Ben-Gurion. But the Israeli people showed how they felt by electing him.

MURRAY RUBIN
Toronto, Canada
THERE is a deceptively familiar arc to the Eric Schneiderman story. The attorney general of the state of New York, an ambitious and ambitiously liberal crusader who supported women’s rights and the #MeToo movement early and often, stood so credibly accused of behaving like a predator in his private life that he was compelled to resign his office a mere three hours after the article featuring these accusations appeared online.

As that New Yorker piece noted, Schneiderman was the kind of guy who was quick to tweet praise of “the brave women and men who speak up about the sexual harassment they had endured at the hands of powerful men.” But like Bill Clinton and Anthony Weiner and Harvey Weinstein before him, Schneiderman appears to have been one of those powerful men. And he used the social access his power and progressive values provided to select his victims and later to bully and threaten them into silence.

Schneiderman engaged in frequent bouts of “non-consensual sexual violence” with his intimate partners—violence often delivered with weirdly un-woke pillow talk. His former girlfriend, Tanya Selvaratnam, who was born in Sri Lanka and is dark-skinned, told the New Yorker, “Sometimes, he’d tell me to call him Master, and he’d slap me until I did.” He also called her his “brown slave” and demanded that she declare herself “his property.”

He slapped and choked them and, they claim, threatened to kill them if they ended the relationship—all while he was swanning around with progressive leaders and accepting awards like the National Institute for Reproductive Health’s “Champion of Choice.” “His hypocrisy is epic,” one of his accusers, Michelle Manning Barish, told the New Yorker.

But it’s not just his hypocrisy that’s epic. His tribe of progressively woke liberals is implicated, too. In an echo of the previous century’s Clinton scandals, many fellow liberals advised women like Barish to keep their stories about Schneiderman—who nurtured national political ambitions—to themselves, arguing that he was “too valuable a politician for the Democrats to lose.” Feminists have long argued that the personal is political. Will Schneiderman’s denouement prove it?

It’s become fashionable to talk about the dangerous era of tribal politics in which we live—how it creates echo chambers and fuels a fake-news epidemic and undermines democratic debate. And there is truth in this. But in our haste to rout Russian trolls and out the alt-right, another feature of tribal behavior has been overlooked, in part because it hits uncomfortably close to home: how a tribe’s ritualistic social signaling can provide cover for a range of sins.

For example, treating women disrespectfully isn’t supposed to happen in the progressive tribe, even though it often does. Schneiderman never publicly broke these rules. In fact, he was a professional champion of them—he brought lawsuits against Harvey Weinstein, for example. Schneiderman “has long been a liberal Democratic champion of women’s rights,” the New Yorker notes, something that his girlfriends acknowledge as part of his appeal. He also attended

CHRISTINE ROSEN

Christine Rosen is managing editor of the Weekly Standard.
the right schools and was invited to the right parties, which is where he met his victims. Indeed, he bonded with one of them over the fact that they had both attended Harvard and shared an enthusiasm for the enlightening effects of Buddhist meditation.

Hence the liberal confusion over revelations of Schneiderman's seemingly bizarre bedroom behavior. It's supposed to be uneducated men in flyover country who do terrible things like demean and batter their women; that's why there is no upper-class equivalent of the derogatory phrase "wife-beater," which refers to an item of clothing (a cheap undershirt) associated with the working classes. Schneiderman seems to have viewed himself as akin to the successful and dashing rough-play enthusiast Christian from *Fifty Shades of Grey*, but his ex-girlfriends say he was more like the abusive, controlling husband in the Julia Roberts movie *Sleeping with the Enemy*. The cognitive dissonance is difficult for many liberal activists to process. "It hurts the most when it's one of the 'good' ones," Jill Filipovic lamented in the *New York Times*.

But the tendency to speak of all men as either "good ones" or "bad ones" is precisely the problem. The kind of behavior Schneiderman is accused of (and the entitlement that fuels it) can be found in every social class and among both women and men. The tribal instinct to avoid acknowledging it leads to embarrassing intellectual acrobatics. "It cuts to the heart of the incongruities of being a progressive woman in 2018," Filipovic argued, "Donald Trump, who boasted about sexually assaulting and degrading women, is the president; the rage and dismay brought on by his election has also meant that powerful men are finally being called to account. And yet that accounting has made clear that even the men we thought we could trust—especially, perhaps, the ostentatiously good ones—may not be quite what they seem."

Filipovic here engages in a frantic attempt to push Schneiderman into another tribe (toxic, Trump-era brutes!) rather than taking a clear-eyed look at why her own tribe was such a comfortable place for yet another predator-in-progressive's-clothing to thrive. It's easier to reconcile the behavior of someone like Schneiderman if he can be called a misogynist confidence man rather than what he was: the logical conclusion of a woke progressivism that values saying the right things more than doing them.

This is precisely what blinded so many people to the behavior of these progressive men for so long (and what blinds many avid Trump supporters to their president's many flaws). And the behavior is unlikely to have stayed confined to the bedroom. If the women's stories are true, Schneiderman's pathological sense of entitlement no doubt infected his professional judgment as well as his personal life. It's why he believed that he could bully these women and get away with it. It's why he thought he was immune to the effects of self-medicating with alcohol and drugs even after he injured himself and lost control on numerous occasions. It's why he didn't hesitate to threaten to break the laws he was entrusted to enforce in order to bully his girlfriends.

Tribes are reassuring, especially when they exact swift justice on outsiders. They give their members a sense of purpose and meaning. But they are bad at policing their own. Discussing his study of traditional societies with *Smithsonian* magazine, historian Jared Diamond once noted: "Traditional societies are small.... Their membership is based particularly on relationships." He surmised that this insularity and scale was one of the reasons they often failed to develop strong political leaders. It's also a good formula for allowing abusers to hide in plain sight.

We can justly punish those who abuse and assault others. We can teach women to defend themselves, something too often overlooked in these stories of abuse. A woman who knows basic self-defense skills could have inflicted some damage on predators like Weinstein or Schneiderman; self-defense also teaches a mental toughness and awareness that is far more useful as a preventive measure than doling out rape whistles and lecturing women about toxic masculinity. But none of this will change the fact that people of weak character and corrupt values can be found everywhere—in the most isolated and uneducated populations of rural America, in churches and synagogues, in the Ivy League, even in the White House. We know this to be true, but we don't want it to be true, and so, again and again, we profess shock when the truth slaps us in the face.

One of Schneiderman's accusers, the impeccably liberal M. Manning Barish, found the tribal demand too difficult to sustain. She had watched a Trump White House aide come undone after he was accused of violent misbehavior toward women. "After Rob Porter," Barish told the *New Yorker*, "I was struggling about whether to come forward. I felt guilt and shame that I was encouraging other women to speak out but wasn't doing the same. I was a hypocrite."

She is a hypocrite no longer, and her brave example is worthy of study and emulation.
THERE ARE GOOD reasons to be wary of impeachment talk,” wrote the New York Times columnist David Leonhardt earlier this year. The sentence was his way of introducing 800 words of impeachment talk, an entire column’s worth of the stuff. He couldn’t help himself.

Many people in Washington these days pretend to be wary of the subject of Donald Trump’s possible impeachment before they call for it. We all agree the odds of the House of Representatives impeaching the president are, at the moment, negligible. This makes impeachment talk fanciful at best. Among Democrats, views range from a Beach Boys–like “maybe if we think and wish and hope and pray, it might come true” to “we have to wait till next year.” As for Republicans, they have repackaged a phrase from an earlier era: You can have our president when you pry him from our cold dead fingers….

Impeachment talk flames up whenever news from the chattering class’s number-one topic—the legal difficulties of the president, from Stormy Daniels to Russian conspirators—briefly runs dry. The thought of impeachment is much more stimulating to a Washingtonian than trying to figure out why Obamacare premiums are rising or whether the preliminary revenue projections from tax reform are likely to prove accurate. Scandal junkies construct timelines of obscure, unrelated events of unknown importance involving marginal figures (Did George Papadopoulos meet with Joseph Misfud in London before or after Sam Clovis recruited Carter Page for the Trump campaign???). The convoluted narratives compensate for the fact that none of us has so far uncovered anything that might carry a hint of a whisper of an offense that could incriminate Trump—none of us, that is, but Robert Mueller and his band of Javerts. And maybe not even them.

Leonhardt, like his colleagues at the Times, is impatient with this uncertain state of affairs. His column was meant to demonstrate that even our meager collection of undisputed facts is enough to put the president in the dock. The particular crime or misdemeanor he has in mind is obstruction of justice—the very same charge used to impeach Bill Clinton. In his bill of particulars, Leonhardt notes that Trump had asked the FBI director, James Comey, to lighten up in his pursuit of Trump’s former adviser Michael Flynn. He asked two other advisers to make the same request. After Trump fired Comey, he tweeted about it triumphantly and a few days later told an interviewer on television that he’d fired Comey because of “the Russia thing.” Several times he publicly berated his attorney general, Jeff Sessions, for letting the investigation proceed. Then, again taking to twitter, Trump angrily denounced Andrew McCabe, another G-man involved in the investigation.

“Obstruction of justice involves intent,” Leonhardt instructed his readers. And plainly these actions reveal Trump’s intent.

You can say that again, David! (Just wait—I bet he does.) How can anyone doubt Trump’s intent? He

ANDREW FERGUSON

ANDREW FERGUSON is a senior editor at the Weekly Standard and the author of Crazy U and Land of Lincoln.
Commentary

wants the investigation to end, says so repeatedly, and will do anything to make this happen, short of shutting it down himself. During the hyperbolic Trump era, I have grown leery of intensifiers, from both the president and his critics, but even I must admit that if Trump’s behavior constitutes obstruction of justice, it is surely the most ostentatious display of obstruction in the history of...okay, the universe.

Even the behind-scenes actions Leonhardt includes in his indictment, such as Trump’s telling the White House counsel to fire Mueller, would in effect have been carried out in the full light of day. At least Richard Nixon tried to keep his obstruction on the QT. A man who brags publicly about what he’s doing as he’s doing it, and then loudly complains when it doesn’t have the desired effect, probably isn’t intending to commit a crime. Such a man may be a sociopath—but not necessarily a criminal.

The thinness of the case against Trump, as it stands now, is really beside the point. Impeachment fever has become a permanent condition in the body politic. Nearly every president in the last half century has faced calls for impeachment, and not just from lunatics. When Ronald Reagan appeared (incorrectly) to be deeply involved in the Iran Contra affair, many of his opponents called for impeachment. Bill Clinton, as we know, was well and truly impeached. The idea of impeaching George W. Bush was catnip for left-wing Democrats from the moment the Iraq adventure went sour. Even the usually level-headed legal commentator Andrew McCarthy wrote a book with the subtitle “Building the Political Case for Obama’s Impeachment.”

At least McCarthy’s effort was best viewed as a thought experiment: Can a legal case for impeachment, even one that’s airtight, survive without popular support? The latter is as crucial as the former. Recall that Nixon’s public reason for stepping down was that his political base on Capitol Hill had eroded to the point where the president would be essentially powerless for the rest of his term. (Of course, the loss of his political power also made his impeachment inevitable.) In the laws of political thermodynamics, any bold action can create an opposite and equal reaction, and it doesn’t get much bolder than presidential impeachment.

To cite a small example: Once Republicans raised the possibility of impeachment, Obama’s defenders leapt into action. They were building fundraising campaigns around McCarthy’s book a month before the publication date. A more consequential example: The legally impeccable but widely unpopular impeachment of Clinton killed Republicans’ hoped-for gains in the 1998 midterm elections.

These lessons are not lost on professional Democrats and soberer activists. When six Democratic congressmen formally introduced articles of impeachment late last year, party leaders, including Nancy Pelosi and Steny Hoyer, treated them like overenthusiastic children tracking mud all over the nice new carpet. Even Adam Schiff, the president’s most vocal congressional critic, took to the New York Times op-ed page to stifle impeachment talk.

It’s the smart move. Party leaders had much the same reaction when Democrats last succumbed to impeachment fever, in the election year 2006, under President Bush. Not coincidentally, 2006 was also the year of a Democratic landslide in congressional races—the same result Democrats hope for this fall. A serious bid for impeachment that year would likely have rallied the Republicans and stemmed the Democratic tide.

But that was a long time ago, and between then and now a different Democratic Party has emerged beneath the feet of leaders like Pelosi and Hoyer, whose establishmentarian realism annoys their base just as Paul Ryan’s relative moderation rankled Trump voters. Schiff may have been right to call impeachment talk “bait,” a trap waiting to be sprung by cunning Republicans. Ordinary Democrats are eager to chomp. A recent Quinnipiac poll showed that 71 percent of Democrats favor impeachment proceedings if their party takes the House of Representatives in November. Over the last six months the Democratic activist/billionaire Tom Steyer has collected 5.2 million signatures for his impeachment petition.

Republicans react with mock horror, begging the Democrats not to throw them in the impeachment briar patch. Trump has even made it a riff in the frequent “campaign style” speeches he can’t resist making to Republicans out in cow country. He singles out Pelosi, of course, but also Maxine Waters, who has been calling for Trump’s removal since his inauguration. “She’s a low-IQ individual,” the president says, gallantly, as his audiences cheer. ➤
ON JULY 4, 1863, Rabbi Sabato Morais of Philadelphia’s Mikveh Israel congregation ascended the pulpit to deliver the Sabbath sermon. Those assembled in the synagogue knew that over the previous few days, Union and Confederate forces had been engaged in an epic engagement at Gettysburg, but they had no idea who had won or whether Confederate forces would continue onward to Washington or Philadelphia. That year, July 4 coincided with the 17th of Tammuz, when Jews commemorate the Roman breach of the walls of Jerusalem. Morais prayed that God not allow Jerusalem’s fate to befall the American capital and assured his audience that he had not forgotten the joyous date on which he spoke: “I am not indifferent, my dear friends, to the event, which, four score and seven years ago, brought to this new world light and joy.”

An immigrant from Italy, Morais had taught himself English utilizing the King James Bible. Few Americans spoke in this manner, including Abraham Lincoln. Three days later, the president himself reflected before an audience: “How long ago is it?—eighty-odd years—since on the Fourth of July for the first time in the history of the world a nation by its representatives assembled and declared as a self-evident truth that ‘all men are created equal.’” Only several months later, at the dedication of the Gettysburg cemetery, would Lincoln refer to the birth of our nation in Morais’s manner, making “four score and seven years ago” one of the most famous phrases in the English language and thereby endowing his address with a prophetic tenor and scriptural quality.

This has led historians, including Jonathan Sarna and Marc Saperstein, to suggest that Lincoln may have read Morais’s sermon, which had been widely circulated. Whether or not this was so, the Gettysburg address parallels Morais’s remarks in that it, too, joins mourning for the fallen with a recognition of American independence, allowing those who had died to define our appreciation for the day that our “forefathers brought forth a new nation conceived in liberty.” Lincoln’s words stressed that a nation must always link civic celebration of its independence with the lives given on its behalf. Visiting the cemetery at Gettysburg, he argued, requires us to dedicate ourselves to the unfinished work that “they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced.” He went on: “From these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion,” thereby ensuring that “these dead shall not have died in vain.”

The literary link between Morais’s recalling of Jerusalem and Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address makes it
all the more striking that it is the Jews of today's Judea who make manifest the lessons of Lincoln's words. Just as the battle of Gettysburg concluded on July 3, Israelis hold their Memorial Day commemorations on the day before their Independence Day celebrations. On the morning of the Fourth of Iyar, a siren sounds throughout the land, with all pausing their everyday activities in reverent memory of those who had died. There are few more stunning images of Israel today than those of highways on which thousands of cars grind to a halt, all travelers standing at the roadside, and all heads bowing in commemoration. Throughout the day, cemeteries are visited by the family members of those lost. Only in the evening does the somber Yom Hazikaron give way to the joy of the Fifth of Iyar's Yom Ha'atzmaut, Independence Day. For anyone who has experienced it, the two days define each other. Those assembled in Israel's cemeteries facing the unbearable loss of loved ones do so in the knowledge that it is the sacrifice of their beloved family members that make the next day's celebration of independence possible. And the celebration of independence is begun with the acknowledgement by millions of citizens that those who lie in those cemeteries, who gave “their last full measure of devotion,” obligate the living to ensure that the dead did not die in vain.

The American version of Memorial Day, like the Gettysburg Address itself, began as a means of decorating and honoring the graves of Civil War dead. It is unconnected to the Fourth of July, which takes place five weeks later. Both holidays are observed by many (though not all) Americans as escapes from work, and too few ponder the link between the sacrifice of American dead and the freedom that we the living enjoy. There is thus no denying that the Israelis’ insistence on linking their Independence Day celebration with their Memorial Day is not only more appropriate; it is more American, a truer fulfillment of Lincoln's message at Gettysburg.

In studying the Hebrew calendar of 1776, I was struck by the fact that the original Fourth of July, like that of 1863, fell on the 17th of Tammuz. It is, perhaps, another reminder that Gettysburg and America’s birth must always be joined in our minds, and linked in our civic observance. It is, of course, beyond unlikely that Memorial Day will be moved to adjoin the fourth of July. Yet that should not prevent us from learning from the Israeli example. Imagine if the third of July were dedicated to remembering the battle that concluded on that date. Imagine if “Gettysburg Day” involved a brief moment of commemoration by “us, the living” for those who gave the last full measure of devotion. Imagine if tens—perhaps hundreds—of millions of Americans paused in unison from their leisure activities for a minute or two to reflect on the sacrifice of generations past. Surely our observance of the Independence Day that followed could not fail to be affected; surely the Fourth of July would be marked in a manner more worthy of a great nation.

There is thus no denying that the Israelis’ insistence on linking their Independence Day celebration with their Memorial Day is not only more appropriate; it is more American, a truer fulfillment of Lincoln’s message at Gettysburg.
I had lunch recently with a colleague of mine named Allan. He’s a retired professor who once taught at a university in New York and now teaches inside prisons. Allan was talking in despairing tones about America and wanted to know my thoughts on the matter. When I asked him to be more specific, he was taken aback at the idea that further clarification was needed. He couldn’t understand my failure to see the utter hopelessness of the society all around me.

Allan is 68 years old and a self-proclaimed Marxist. Both of his parents were surgeons from New York, and he attended private schools all his life. He graduated from Harvard and Princeton with degrees in philosophy and French literature. Although he and I are on opposite ends of the political spectrum, I still enjoy the sharpness of Allan’s mind and his compassionate spirit; but I resist, as best as I can, his extreme pessimism. He believes mankind is going to be felled soon by an apocalyptic revolutionary blow, courtesy of the international working class. Until such time comes, however, he will remain in a state of despair about the United States.

“Jason, black men are being killed in this country,” he said.

“Oh, I know that,” I said. “They are being exterminated.” I went on: “We both live in Chicago, where they are being massacred on a weekly and daily basis, but who is killing them? Huh? Are white cops going in and slaughtering them? Are white people from the
suburbs gunning them down? Is the military going in and killing these black men?”

“If the cops kill them,” he said, “what incentive do they have to obey the law and—?”

“Listen,” I told him, “the spate of killings of unarmed black men by police officers in recent years is tragic and a disgrace. It is, I believe, the work of a small minority of rogue police officers, or ordinary officers weighed down by a form of statistical reasoning—given the disproportionate homicide rates among black men—that breeds a pervasive fear of blacks among the general population. This is sad, and it is a blight against the humanity of all persons.”

With that concession in place, I continued: “However, against the heroic commitment of the entire police force in this country, and given the enormous contribution that police officers—black, white, and Hispanic—are making every day by going into black and Hispanic communities overrun by murderous street gangs and protecting the lives of innocent residents living in these tragic neighborhoods, we need to keep things in perspective here. Police officers, when all is said and done, overworked as they are, underpaid as they are, and given the poor public image that they suffer, are doing a good job of trying to protect black lives in the inner cities of this country, where thugs and hooligans think neighborhoods are either extensions of their living rooms, or their own private fiefdoms where they can do as they please.”

Allan shifted in his chair. He asked what I thought about racial profiling. Here, I agreed with him that the practice is unjust because it arbitrarily targets members of a law-abiding majority at any given time. Because law enforcement agents have a coercive monopoly on the use of force against virtually helpless citizens, profiling is a legally problematic affair that, given the broad discretionary powers of the officers who exercise it, can lead to disastrous consequences. But there is still some possibility for rationality in the exercise of racial profiling itself. That is, an officer who has made an error of judgment in singling out a person for suspicious activity based on race could revise his actions before stripping the person of his or her dignity. The act of profiling by police officers, while embarrassing and painful to an innocent person, is not irrevocably harmful.

I explained to Allan that there was a more deadly and insidious form of racial profiling that was taking place in our nation. Yet this profiling fails to provoke the righteous indignation of those who care for universal justice. I was speaking of the racial profiling done by blacks against other blacks, which manifests itself in black-on-black crime. Black men, in particular, target other black people as prey to be annihilated.

This form of racial profiling is worse than police racial profiling, and not because it is an in-group phenomenon. Rather, it’s because the deadly intent of its perpetrators leaves a trail of tragic, irrevocable consequences. It is neither white authority nor white apathy that so threatens the lives of so many black Americans. The average white person has not created policies or instituted systemic forms of oppression that force the hands of criminals on the streets.

When some black folks complain that white people don’t value black lives, I often ask: What exactly do you mean? In fact, too many black Americans are reluctant to hold other black people accountable for the horrific crimes they are committing against one another. Members of Black Lives Matter want white people to esteem black lives and value the humanity of black people when they themselves can’t condemn and express moral outrage at those who maim and kill black children in the course of gang warfare, senseless street violence, and drive-by shootings. Why do white people have a larger moral responsibility to care about black people than black people have to care about their own lives? And why are blacks in need of special white nurturance?

Compared with the recent spate of police killings of unarmed black men, black-on-black crime is tantamount to a national-security disaster. The moral hysteria raised by a few incidents of police brutality in the face of this larger national tragedy is reckless hyperbole. It hides from the nation a deep malaise at work in the psyche of some in the black community: a form of self-hatred that manifests itself in a homicidal rage not fundamentally against white people, but against other black people.
Allan, like others on the left, places the blame for this black self-hatred on so-called white privilege. In our lunch conversation, he veered into a case for reparations for blacks based on this privilege and the ways in which unfair discrimination against black Americans is sociologically responsible for what I consider pathologies in some black communities. In the end, we agreed to disagree, as we do on most things.

Our conversation, however, had left my mind racing with thoughts about the moral hypocrisy of Black Lives Matter. As I sat at my desk late that evening and looked out my window as the street grew dark, I thought about two other transgressive and unpardonable sins of the Black Lives Matter movement. The first has to do with its outrageous position on Israel; the second pertains to its immoral demands regarding the education of black Americans.

The Leaders of Black Lives Matter have written a profoundly anti-Israel (and anti-American) manifesto in which they accuse Israel of “genocide” and “apartheid.” The manifesto endorses the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and takes the view that the United States justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliances with Israel. This, according to Black Lives Matter, makes the U.S. complicit in a supposedly genocidal massacre of the Palestinian people.

As a staunch defender of Israel on moral grounds, I categorically condemn the moral ineptitude of the Black Lives Matter movement on this point. If there is a victim in the Middle East, it is the beleaguered state of Israel. The Jewish state is the only technologically advanced and democratic country in a region of illiberal, primitive, and human-rights-abusing nations that treat women worse than cattle and don’t know the meaning of religious reciprocity. Since its founding, Israel has fought marauders in the likes of the Jordanians, the Egyptians, and the Syrians. These parties have invaded Israel, threatened her right to exist, and tried to eliminate her and Jewry itself from the region. Israel’s enemies among the Palestinians have sought to do the same with the help of terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and the Palestinian Authority. And the Palestinians have made an unprecedented demand in the history of warfare. Displaced by a war that their leaders started and lost, they claim a right to return to a territory they failed to conquer. While Arab Israelis serve in the Knesset side by side with Israeli Jews, Palestinians have elected governments whose charters have called for the annihilation of Jews and whose leaders portray Jews as pigs, vermin, and an evil to be eradicated.

Israel is the only country I know of that grants citizenship and land rights to its avowed enemies. What’s more, Israel offered a Palestinian state to both Yasser Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas and was not only repeatedly turned down but repaid with the second intifada and the indiscriminate murder of Israeli citizens. Palestinian intransigence is forged in the conviction that no deal will be made so long as Jews—any Jews—occupy the land of Israel. In 2005, Israel unilaterally handed over its territory in Gaza to the terrorist government Hamas and was, and still is, rewarded by a daily showering of rockets into Israeli land.

With its accusations against Israeli Jews, Black Lives Matter suggests that in their support of Israel, such Jews are complicit in the unproven crimes of genocide and apartheid. We must remember that even amid the daily onslaughts of war and terror that Palestinians inflict on Jews, the Israelis, in a spirit of almost irrational altruism, take great pains to limit civilian casualties and to ensure that those caught in a war they did not personally initiate are spared as much harm as possible.

Black Lives Matter is not only being unjust toward Israel; its anti-Israel stance betrays Jews in America, to whom blacks in this country are enormously indebted. If there are any unsung heroes of the civil-rights movement, it is those Jews who played an enormous but largely unacknowledged role in the liberation of blacks from racial oppression. American Jews undertook monumental efforts to found and fund some of the most important civil-rights organizations in the U.S. These include the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). (And anti-American) manifesto in which they accuse Israel of “genocide” and “apartheid.” The manifesto endorses the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and takes the view that the United States justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliances with Israel. This, according to Black Lives Matter, makes the U.S. complicit in a supposedly genocidal massacre of the Palestinian people.

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African Americans participated in the Mississippi Freedom Summer in 1964. Leaders of the Jewish Reform Movement were arrested with the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in St. Augustine, Florida, in 1964, after mounting a challenge to racial segregation in public accommodations. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were drafted in the conference room of the Religious Action Center (RAC) of Reform Judaism, under the aegis of the Leadership Conference, which for decades was in the RAC’s building.

The hard, cold, and unsentimental fact of the matter is that without Jewish financial backing and moral contributions, there may never have been a civil-rights movement. What I consider to be our country’s heroic Third Founding (the Second Founding being Lincoln’s speech at Gettysburg), which culminated in the passage of the Civil Rights Acts, would have at least been severely postponed.

Charged by God with a duty to repair the world and to remedy injustice wherever they find it, the Jews have maintained a civilization for more than 3,000 years. They carried their duty into the 20th century by playing a pivotal role in widening the pantheon of the human community in America. The Jews tweaked the moral consciences of their fellow Americans and entreated them to consider blacks and all persons of color as possessing dignity and moral worth equal to that of any other human being. The Jews entreated their fellow Americans to consider blacks and all persons of color as possessing dignity and moral worth equal to that of any other human being.

The Jews tweaked the moral consciences of their fellow Americans and entreated them to consider blacks and all persons of color as possessing dignity and moral worth equal to that of any other human being. The anti-Israeli platform of Black Lives Matters has understandably alienated some progressive Jews in America who had initially aligned themselves with the movement. And it has alienated this black American as well.

There is another morally irresponsible claim made by the Black Lives Matter movement—a claim that should offend any self-respecting black American citizen. I refer to the movement’s demand that the United States provide free college education to blacks. On what grounds is this organization making such a demand? Why free college education for blacks but not for poor whites or for Latino, Asian, or Native-American college students? What special sociopolitical conditions exist for blacks that do not hold for other ethnic or racial groups such that blacks deserve to be exempt from paying college tuition?

Could it be that the spokespersons for the movement are failing here to recognize another cultural pathology blacks face? I have in mind the problem of single-parent families—in which 70 percent of African-American children now live. This is a financially untenable situation for a massive swath of black America. And it is certainly an issue over which blacks have control. This crisis is not a consequence or inheritance of slavery or Jim Crow. Indeed the Jim Crow period saw significantly lower single-parent birth rates among blacks. The downward spiral of the black family, the marked absence of fathers, cannot be the responsibility of white Americans. Nor should white Americans ever be asked what they intend to do about that problem, as the problem is not theirs. What we have here is a widespread failure among black Americans to exercise free will in a judicious and wise manner—a failure to appreciate that free will comes with a moral obligation to be fiscally mature. The question that the Black Lives Matter movement should be addressing here is as follows: What do you intend to do about these problems and issues, which are endemic to your communities?

Realizing, of course, that not every single parent can afford to send her children to college, perhaps the movement is simply attempting to pass that responsibility on to society. This leads us to some significant philosophical questions: Are the procreative choices that we make in life the responsibility of others, or are they our own? Is it a form of child neglect to bring more children into the world than you can afford to support? When you have children, is it fair to expect your neighbors to bear the financial responsibility of raising them when they may have decided not to have any, or to have just one, or two, or just the exact number that their budget can accommodate over the course of a lifetime? If someone has sacrificed and planned his life carefully and has already incurred debt by sending his own children to school, by what moral right would anyone dare tell him that because of racial disparities he is obligated to finance the college education of someone else’s child?

Those on the far left will say that free college for blacks is a social good. I have heard this repeatedly, and I
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have often asked for clarification. By social good, people often mean “the public interest.” When asked to define the public interest, leftists tend to fumble and speak convolutedly about assorted moral conundrums. But society is nothing more than the sum of each individual. Therefore, any reference to the public good would logically first have to refer to the good that each individual person can do. How do we know what that good is? One of the glorious achievements of this country is that here we get to choose a conception of the good for ourselves. For some, it is having a family; for others, it is pursuing a career or devoting one’s life to a specialized hobby, service to others, traveling—you name it. There are as many conceptions of the good as there are persons to imagine them. And in the United States of America, the state has no business imposing its conception—or any conception—of the good on you or deciding a priori what your conception of the good is. It leaves you free to choose for yourself so long as you do not violate the individual rights of others. If a notion of the public good is foisted on you, it means that a group of people has decided that its interests and conception of the good should override your conscience. This is an act akin to tyranny, as it takes away your capacity to decide for yourself.

The cardinal sin of asking for anything for free in this life is that you abnegate your responsibility not just for maintaining your existence but, more important, for achieving your humanity. For we achieve our humanity in several ways. One is by exchanging goods and services with others. We affirm the worth of the other, and we respect the other by rewarding him or her for such services, and, in so doing, our agency is implicated in affirming our self-worth and dignity in the beautiful act of reciprocity. In reciprocity, there is a recognition of equality among us as individuals.

The demand for a free education, along with the demand for race-based reparations by Black Lives Matter and others, is symptomatic of another problem in race relations. There are those on the left who see self-reliance, initiative, and a commitment to one’s own life as, at best, hopelessly naive. This skepticism doesn’t apply to their own lives—oh, no, they have gotten where they are by the exercise of their own virtues. But the state apparatus and its system are so corrupt and stacked against blacks, they believe, that while the application of those virtues will always be possible for a Condoleezza Rice or a Colin Powell or an Oprah Winfrey, it’s not an option for most blacks in America. Such people see grit, honor, hard work, and self-reliance as “white” ideals that are being imposed on others. Those traits reinforce whiteness; in their minds, and there is a gnawing resentment of those blacks who wish to appropriate such virtues for themselves. They cease being black in the minds of some in affirming our self-worth and dignity in the beautiful act of reciprocity. In reciprocity, there is a recognition of equality among us as individuals.

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on the far left. A sizable number of well-meaning but, in the end, racist progressives need black people to be black. It’s the darnedest thing, but an African colleague of mine, dressed in a formal Chanel suit, was met with disappointment by her department chair. Why, she was asked, didn’t she wear something more ethnic like an African dress, and how come she was losing her accent?

Some on the activist left heed the call of black dependence with glee because it places them in a permanent position of power as part of a managerial class lording it over a needy set of entitled subjects whose interests they represent. The neediness and dependence of their charges simply reinforce how independent, privileged, and powerful those in the managerial class are in relation to their socioeconomic inferiors.

Finally, when you demand anything for free, you are claiming a status of such impoverishment that you hold yourself up as an object of pity. But, unlike compassion and mercy, pity is not characteristically American. Pity denotes contemptuous sorrow for the misery or distress of another person. And the contempt one feels is linked to a moral virtue the other harbors: an unwillingness to exercise one’s agency in the relief of that suffering. To present oneself as a lifelong socioeconomic supplicant is morally repugnant because it requires that one become an active participant in one’s own infantilization. It permits that one’s own agency be expropriated by others, and it requires the surrender of one’s capabilities.

Such ideas assume a malevolence about the American polis that is untenable and empirically false. It’s only natural, therefore, that many Americans reject this type of victimhood. No doors are closed forever to anyone in this great country of ours. If your ethos and character disposition are set for achievement, if your will is wedded to a resilience and tenacity, and you rid yourself of the idea that you are entitled to your financial earnings of other people, you will find a way to make it here. On the other hand, the kind of dependency that Black Lives Matter promotes lays the groundwork for personal failure.

My friend Allan would disagree angrily with all this. But I thank him just the same for helping me clarify my thoughts on Black Lives Matter, a movement that stands to set back the moral progress of our nation and the progress of American blacks. I’d also note that perhaps I don’t see hopelessness at every turn or find despair in every corner of America because I ignore those who preach helplessness where opportunity abounds. And I reject their nurturance of scapegoating and dependency. Israel is good. So, too, is America. And the achievements of both countries demonstrate, above all, the virtues of self-realization and persistence. ’Til we lunch again, My ’Black Lives Matter’ Problem : June 2018
THE RISE OF BLACK ANTI-SEMITISM

BY JAMES KIRCHICK

THE YEAR 2018 has thus far been toxic for black-Jewish relations. In February, Women’s March co-president Tamika Mallory attended the Nation of Islam’s (NOI) annual “Saviours’ Day” gathering, where sect leader Louis Farrakhan delivered a characteristic anti-Semitic tirade. “When you want something in this world, the Jew holds the door,” Farrakhan declared. “White folks are going down, and Satan is going down, and Farrakhan by God’s grace has pulled the cover off of that Satanic Jew—and I’m here to say, your time is up.” For good measure, Farrakhan also claimed that Jews control the FBI as well as Mexico.

James Kirchick, a visiting fellow at the Brookings Institution, is the author of The End of Europe: Dictators, Demagogues, and the Coming Dark Age.
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and he repeated a relatively new conspiracy theory, the “Pot Plot,” alleging that Jews promote homosexuality among black men through the distribution of a special form of marijuana.

When it was revealed that Mallory had sat in the audience for this rant, she not only refused to distance herself from the anti-Semitic cult but boasted of her three-decade long relationship with it. “I was raised in activism and believe that as historically oppressed people, blacks, Jews, Muslims and all people must stand together to fight racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia,” she said in a statement. Declaring that she is “guided by the loving principles of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.,” who dedicated his entire career to opposing the very sort of racial separatism, hatred, and conspiracy promoted by the likes of Farrakhan and others of his ilk, Mallory made clear that she had no intention of ever disassociating herself from the NOI.

While some black leaders and writers criticized Mallory, her stubbornness found support in high places. “Now you work with people all the time with whom you disagree,” said Valerie Jarrett, former senior adviser to President Barack Obama, to the ladies of The View. Jarrett spoke as if America’s foremost anti-Semite were just some recalcitrant House Republican in need of a stern, Oval Office arm-twist. To this day, Mallory (along with her Women’s March sisters-in-arms Linda Sarsour and Carmen Perez) proudly considers Farrakhan an ally, and there is no indication that she or the organization she leads has suffered serious reputational damage because of her association with him.

On the contrary, Mallory has successfully exacted revenge on at least one prominent Jewish organization that criticized her for associating with the NOI. In April, following national outrage sparked by the arrest of two black men at a Philadelphia Starbucks, the coffee giant announced that the Anti-Defamation League would be one of four civil-rights organizations to participate in diversity-training exercises for its employees across the country. Mallory loudly objected, accusing the ADL of “constantly attacking black and brown people,” by which she seems to have meant Tamika Mallory and Louis Farrakhan. Joining her in protest was Jewish Voice for Peace—a fringe group advocating the Boycott, Sanctions, and Divestment campaign against Israel—and other leftist groups that oppose the ADL over its engagement with police departments for racial-sensitivity training. A little over a week after Mallory launched her social-media campaign demanding that Starbucks drop the ADL, the company caved.

This was not the only instance of prominent black political figures associating with Farrakhan to emerge in the early months of 2018. In January, a long-hidden photograph was published showing Barack Obama smiling with Farrakhan at a 2005 Congressional Black Caucus reception. A member of the CBC, Andre Carson, later admitted to holding a meeting with the Nation of Islam leader in 2015. Farrakhan claimed that Keith Ellison—current deputy chairman of the Democratic National Committee—was also present at the meeting, a claim Ellison denies. But given Ellison’s record of misleading statements on his relationship with Farrakhan and the NOI, there is no reason to trust him on this question.

It’s hard to imagine that left-wing activists or Democratic politicians would keep their careers after associating with a figure who spouts hatred against any other minority group the way Farrakhan does with Jews. Having attained a certain level of political power or social capital, however, Mallory, Jarret, Obama, and the CBC have apparently insulated themselves from criticism on this point, at least among their fellow progressives and much of the elite media.

Such invulnerability to public condemnation has not been the experience of Trayon White, a Washington, D.C., city councillor representing the capitol’s poorest neighborhood of Anacostia. During a brief snow flurry in March, White published a video on his official Facebook page blaming the adverse weather on the Rothschild family. “Man, it just started snowing out of nowhere this morning, man. Y’all better pay attention to this climate control, man, this climate manipulation,” the 34-year-old, college-educated, elected official told his constituents. “And D.C. keep talking about, ’We a resilient city.’ And that’s a model based off the Rothschilds controlling the climate to create natural disasters they can pay for to own the cities, man. Be careful.”

White seemed genuinely perplexed when it was explained to him that assertions about a European Jewish banking family manipulating the weather had anti-Semitic undertones. And those inclined to give White the benefit of the doubt, presuming his words came more from ignorance than malice, were forced to reconsider when it emerged that he had donated $500 to the very same “Saviours’ Day” event attended by Mallory. Nor did White do himself any favors when, invited by local Jewish leaders to the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum, he abruptly left in the middle of a personally guided tour. At a rally called to defend White, organized by a mayoral appointee, a Nation of Islam representative blasted one of White’s Jewish fellow council members as a “fake Jew” and referred to Jews as “termites.”
Finally, in April, New York Assemblywoman Diana Richardson publicly accused Jews of gentrifying her Brooklyn district, a strange accusation considering that it includes Flatbush and Crown Heights, neighborhoods that have long had sizeable Jewish populations. Responding to a member of a local community board who complained of people ringing her doorbell to ask if she was interested in selling her house, Richardson replied, “It must be Jewish people.” Earlier in the same meeting, she gratuitously referred to a Brooklyn legislator as “the Jewish senator from southern Brooklyn.”

All these episodes follow the familiar pattern for black–Jewish controversies, which have erupted periodically since the late 1960s: A black figure of some (often negligible) prominence will make a statement offending Jews, Jewish leaders will respond with both self-flagellating concern and righteous outrage, and both communities will leave the fracas feeling resentful toward the other. In a 1992 essay for the New York Times, Harvard scholar Henry Louis Gates Jr. described anti-Semitism among African Americans as “a weapon in the raging battle of who will speak for black America: those who have sought common cause with others, or those who preach a barricaded withdrawal into racial authenticity.” Anti-Semitism, in other words, is a tool used by political entrepreneurs in a continuation of the internecine fight for black authority. This fight initially pitted mainstream, philo-Semitic, consensus-seeking leaders such as Martin Luther King and Bayard Rustin against radical, separatist, black-nationalist figures of varying ideological (and religious) stripes. While it may be accurate to blame individual opportunists or would-be leaders for these controversies, it is nonetheless a dispiriting commentary on the political potency of anti-Semitism within black communities that such tactics often work (just witness the career of Sharpton).\(^*\) Attitudinal surveys conducted by the ADL consistently show that African Americans harbor “anti-Semitic proclivities” at a rate significantly higher than the general population (23 percent and 14 percent respectively in 2016).

Black anti-Semitism typically takes one of two forms: “neighborhood” or conspiratorial. The former developed in the 1950s and ’60s after the postwar migration of southern blacks to northern cities put Jews and African Americans in close proximity to one another, most prominently in New York. Gates described this variety of anti-Semitism as “a familiar pattern of clientelistic hostility toward the neighborhood vendor or landlord.” With Irish dominating the police, and Italians largely controlling the city’s trade unions, Jews were usually the people with whom blacks came into contact at school, the store, in the courtroom, the welfare office, to rent an apartment, or to get credit. “If the walls the Irish and Italians had put up around themselves were largely unbroken, that only made Jewish liberals the most accessible apologists and beneficiaries of an oppressive system, the closest of strangers, the easiest targets,” former Newsday columnist Jim Sleeper wrote in his 1990 history of New York race relations, The Closest of Strangers.

There is nothing particularly unique or special about this type of anti-Semitism, the sort of petty bigotry that afflicts any group living in close quarters with another, whether the communities are Irish–Italian, black–Irish, or Hindu–Muslim. In the American context, this bigotry can be expected to dissipate with time as populations intermarry, crime decreases, living standards rise, and neighborhoods diversify. “Negroes are anti-Semitic because they’re anti-White,” James Baldwin put it simply in a 1967 piece for the Times. If there’s an added layer of resentment to black–Jewish relations that doesn’t afflict black–Irish or black–Italian relations, it’s that Jews are perceived as being a minority population that, having advanced economically, has abandoned the trappings of the ghetto and today successfully “passes” as white.

This “neighborhood” anti-Semitism is a necessary predicate for the second type, the conspiratorial. This is embodied by Farrakhan and either endorsed or echoed by the likes of Mallory and White. It’s what Gates referred to as “anti-Semitism from the top-down,

\(^*\) The same, of course, can and must be said of the white Americans who, if not motivated by racism or xenophobia in voting for Donald Trump, nonetheless had a very high tolerance for it.

engineered and promoted by leaders who affect to be speaking for a larger resentment.” Included among the NOI’s outlandish repertoire are narratives of Jewish slave owners and tales about how African Americans are the true ancient Hebrews of the Old Testament, the latter being the origin of today’s claims of “fake Jews.” Facilitating the spread of anti-Semitism within black communities is a penchant for conspiracy theory, not hard to understand given the historical experience of black people in America. Kidnapped, shipped to this country in slave ships, tortured, experimented on, and subject to legal discrimination, black people have more reason to be skeptical of America, its institutions, and promises than any other population. If one already believes that the CIA invented the crack-cocaine epidemic, or that the government blew up the levees of New Orleans so that Hurricane Katrina would destroy poor black neighborhoods, then how far of a leap is it to believe that Jews control the banks, never mind the weather?

Tensions between African-Americans and Jewish Americans have not been this bad since 1991. In that single, fateful year, the Crown Heights riot resulted in the death of an Australian Jewish student, the Nation of Islam released a libelous tract (The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews) alleging an exceptionally invidious Jewish role in the slave trade, and City University of New York black studies professor Leonard Jeffries made national headlines with his denunciations of “a conspiracy, planned and plotted and programmed out of Hollywood” by “people called Greenberg and Weisberg and Trigliani.”

Disturbing as they were, the black–Jewish quarrels of the early ’90s seemed to follow a peculiar logic. The exodus of Jews into the suburbs and their subsequent assimilation into “white” America, along with the rise of a Jewishly inflected neoconservative movement opposed to affirmative action, inevitably contributed to a weakening of the black–Jewish civil-rights coalition of yore. Moreover, the racial dramas of 1980s New York (Bernie Goetz, the Tawana Brawley case, the Howard Beach attacks, the Central Park Five), along with a stridently Jewish mayor (Ed Koch) who often found himself at odds with equally strident black activists (Al Sharpton et. al.), all contributed to a worsening of black–white relations more generally. This in turn had an adverse effect on black–Jewish relations specifically.

By contrast, today’s contretemps come at a peculiar time. The great political questions of the day all revolve around Donald Trump and the nationalist platform on which he was elected. And no two ethnic groups were more opposed to Trump’s presidential campaign than the blacks and the Jews. Even among those conservatives and Republicans opposed to Trump, Jewish writers, intellectuals, and philanthropists are vastly overrepresented, a point that has not gone unnoticed by the president’s white-supremacist backers.* Prior to the rise of Trump, Jewish voters overwhelmingly gave their money and support to Barack Obama, the nation’s first black president, in both of his campaigns. While his administration’s policies toward Israel and his Iranian nuclear agreement may have divided the Jewish community internally, opposition to the latter waged by much of organized Jewry did not result in serious conflict with American blacks. (The only friction in this regard surfaced in the spring of 2015 when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu accepted an invitation from Capitol Hill Republicans to criticize the pending Iran deal before a joint session of Congress. Some Congressional Black Caucus leaders portrayed this move as a racial slight.)

While African Americans have overwhelmingly voted against every Republican presidential nominee since Barry Goldwater, there are considerable and entirely valid reasons why they would harbor special animosity toward the current president. That a white man who is so extravagantly flawed would immediately follow a black man who carried himself with the dignity and comportment appropriate to the presidency—and that the white man’s campaign was jump-started with racially charged innuendo about the location of his

* See my “Trump’s Terrifying Online Brigades,” Commentary, June 2016.
black predecessor’s birth—has convinced many blacks that the election of Donald Trump was ultimately the result of racial backlash, or “white-lash,” against the nation’s first African-American president. African Americans daily witness a white man saying and doing things that a black man would never get away with (covering up an affair with a porn star, likening the nation’s intelligence services to Nazi Germany, etc.) and reasonably ask whether the election of an African-American president was a bizarre one-off owing to the unique charisma, eloquence, and biracial background of Barack Obama.

Of course, there are many reasons that Donald Trump is president, and the extent to which racial animus played a role is debatable. But such a question is beyond the scope of this essay. Needless to say, blacks have reason to feel embittered and disappointed by the election of Donald Trump. And these feelings have led to a heightened racial consciousness among many black writers, politicians, and activists. What’s significant in this respect is that these black Americans are ardently joined in this sentiment by the overwhelming majority of their fellow Jewish citizens, who also see in the 2016 election not just a racially tinged repudiation of the country’s first black president, but a recrudescence of the nativism and xenophobia that, wherever and whenever they rear their ugly heads, have never been good for the Jews.

In this way, the current nadir in black–Jewish relations resembles the initial eruption of black–Jewish conflict in the late 1960s, which similarly followed a period of political collaboration and therefore struck Jews as a tragic blow. Almost from the beginning of their mass settlement in the United States, Jews played an important role in advancing the civil rights of, and furthering opportunities for, African Americans, whose fate Jews considered intertwined with their own as fellow minorities in a WASP-dominated country. Jews were instrumental in founding the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909 and in the civil-rights movement decades later. Nearly two-thirds of the white participants in the 1964 Freedom Summer were Jews, including Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, who were both murdered, alongside African-American James Chaney, by white supremacists in Mississippi.

Later in that decade, the rise of black separatist movements such as the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers, each of which adopted a Third Worldist ideology and espoused anti-Israel (and often anti-Semitic) rhetoric, thus came as a shock to Jews. What likewise makes this current political moment so perplexing and painful is that most Jews, many conservatives and Republicans included, are right there with blacks in opposing this president and the type of American politics he embodies. The persistence of anti-Semitism in the black community worries Jews who feel that their interests have not been so clearly aligned with those of black Americans since the high-water mark of black–Jewish collaboration in the 1960s.

The prevalence of, and insouciance toward, anti-Semitism in the African-American community mirrors a trend within the broader progressive community. On the left, anti-Semitism is increasingly downplayed because it supposedly afflicts people who are “white” and therefore in possession of “power.” Writing in the Atlantic, John Paul-Pagano recently identified the formula by which the progressive left analyzes bigotry: “Racism equals prejudice plus power.” Because blacks lack power, they cannot be racist, and because Jews possess power, they cannot be victims of racism. Noam Chomsky elaborated on this theme in 2002:

By now Jews in the U.S. are the most privileged and influential part of the population. You find occasional instances of anti-Semitism but they are marginal. There’s plenty of racism, but it’s directed against blacks, Latinos, [and] Arabs are targets of enormous racism, and those problems are real. Anti-Semitism is no longer a problem, fortunately. It’s raised, but it’s raised because privileged people want to make sure they have total control, not just 98 percent control. That’s why anti-Semitism is becoming an issue. Not because of the threat of anti-Semitism; they want to make sure there’s no critical look at the policies the U.S. (and they themselves) support in the Middle East.

Operating under the equation that “racism equals prejudice plus power,” some on the left choose to ignore, rationalize, or entirely excuse black anti-Semitism as a function of unfair power dynamics in a capitalist society. According to this analysis, because blacks supposedly lack political power, or have less of it than Jews, it is either not possible for them to be anti-Semitic, or their anti-Semitism is not worth worrying about compared with that of traditional, right-wing anti-Semitism. “But of course, he did not say that Jews controlled the weather,” a board member of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice wrote in the Forward regarding Trayon White. “He said that the Rothschilds did.” There’s a word for this kind of condescension, which progressives would never display if the person in question were white: racist.
Though Farrakhan regularly fills arenas for his harangues and earns audiences with congressmen, liberals have been at pains to minimize his influence. When progressive Jewish female activists asked Tamika Mallory to distance herself from Farrakhan, Jordan Weissmann, a Jewish writer for Slate, rhetorically asked, “Is there a single Jew in America who is actually worried about Louis Farrakhan or the Nation of Islam?” He explained further with a non sequitur: “I’m not worried about anti-Semitism from the black left because I see zero evidence that it is significantly motivated by anti-Semitism (I seem to recall a lot of young black progressives supporting a guy named Sanders).”* Weissmann later retracted his tweet, but only when it was made apparent to him that Farrakhan posed a “very clear threat to LGBTQ people of color.” Jews, presumably, will just have to get used to hearing Louis Farrakhan call Adolf Hitler “a very great man.”

At a panel organized by Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) that convened at the New School last December, JVP activist Lina Morales readily conceded: “Louis Farrakhan—I think he’s an anti-Semite—but materially, how has he put Jews in danger? Not really, because he only really affects the black community. But people in Chicago, white Jews, love to talk about him and love to paint him as the ultimate anti-Semite. Why is that?” The history of the 20th century should dispel any notion that anti-Semitic maniacs with followings in the tens of thousands are harmless oddities to be ignored. But even if we were to validate Morales’s assumptions—that Farrakhan “only really affects the black community”—it would consign his followers to a sort of unofficial second-class citizenship, as people who adopt the Nation of Islam’s view of the world are condemning themselves to wallow in ignorance. For all the talk about how the NOI helps poor black communities, one will not make it very far in this world if he believes that crafty Jews are trying to keep the black man down with gay weed. (And lest Morales truly believe that Farrakhan’s praise of Hitler doesn’t affect the physical security of Jews, in April, a Jewish man in Crown Heights was attacked by an African-American assailant screaming, “You fake Jews, who are you saying hello to? You’re fake Jews, and you stole all my money and robbed me, and stole my mortgage and my house. I want to kill you!”)

Asked about the Mallory controversy by Yahoo News, Melissa Harris-Perry went so far as to impugn Jews for even raising the issue of Farrakhan. “The most dangerous anti-Semite in the country currently lives at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue,” the former MSNBC host said. “And to have any concern about Louis Farrakhan’s anti-Semitism is weird.” She continued:

* Bernie Sanders was actually deeply unpopular among black voters, a phenomenon that likely had at least something to do with the higher rate of anti-Semitism among blacks.

For all his many faults, Donald Trump has never “questioned the humanity” of “black–Jewish bickering” that guarantees these periodic outbursts will always generate headlines: “the irony of there being conflict where we presume there should be harmony.” Most blacks seek no conflict with Jews, and vice versa. Which is why it is all the more important for responsible black leaders to draw a line in the sand when it comes to toxic figures such as Farrakhan, and to reject the excuses of their enablers. A political coalition that makes room for the likes of such individuals is one that will inherently be unwelcoming to Jews, and one that all decent people should reject.

The recent controversies are reflective not so much of a major, growing rift between blacks and Jews as they are indications of two competing visions for America. On one side stands an increasingly fatalistic progressivism, which maintains a “no enemies to the left” strategy in fighting a twilight struggle against what it considers to be an incipient fascist dictatorship. It is willing to make common cause with all manner of illiberal and regressive political forces provided they hew to the party line. And on the other side sits the postwar American liberal tradition of pluralistic patriotism to which Jews of all political stripes have so faithfully pledged allegiance. All Americans, not just blacks and Jews, have an interest in the outcome of this conflict. *
In the fall of 1968, more than 50,000 New York City teachers went on strike for a total of 37 days in three separate walkouts that kept more than a million students out of the classroom. They sprang from a controversy in an experimental school district located in an obscure Brooklyn neighborhood called Ocean Hill–Brownsville. In the tumultuous year of 1968, these strikes were about more than just a labor battle over salary or working conditions. They turned into a bitter conflict about who would control the city. They exposed and exacerbated tense relations between blacks and whites and inflamed an anti-Semitism that had always existed just under the surface of interethnic and interracial relations. They tore at the heart of the liberal political

coalition, as the labor movement came into conflict with the civil-rights movement. And they provided another piece of evidence that something had gone seriously wrong in New York City and in American cities in general.

The strikes of 1968 helped diminish the standing of the city’s mayor, John Lindsay, a national figure with great ambitions who had promised a more efficient city government as well as a more just city for those living at the margins of society. By the end of 1968, *Time* magazine put Lindsay on its cover under the banner “New York: The Breakdown of a City,” and its accompanying article talked about “John Lindsay’s ten plagues.”

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy would lead to a political takeover of the city’s schools by New York state. It effectively ended any meaningful discussion of school reform for at least three decades, leaving millions of children stuck in a system that would continue to underperform. Ocean Hill–Brownsville also helped transform the city’s political culture, weakening the city’s liberal coalition and strengthening the power of outer-borough whites who would go on to elect Ed Koch in 1977 and Rudy Giuliani in 1993. In the starkest terms, the strikes pitted wealthy whites and poor blacks against middle-class whites and caused massive cognitive dissonance for many liberals who found themselves condemning striking unionized workers for being reactionary and bigoted.

In this way, New York City would prove to be a harbinger of national political trends that would unfold after the 1960s all the way down to the present, when political pundits scratch their heads and try to understand the mysteries of the so-called white working class. Revisiting New York of the late 1960s, and specifically the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy, might help these pundits figure out how the national political landscape changed so dramatically.

**WITH INTEGRATION BECOMING INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT AND ‘BLACK POWER’ GAINING INFLUENCE, SOME IN THE AFRICAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY BEGAN TO ARGUE THAT THE WAY FORWARD WAS NOT INTEGRATION BUT ‘COMMUNITY CONTROL’ OF THE SCHOOLS.**

At the center of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy was Mayor Lindsay. The tall and handsome patriarch had been elected as a reform Republican mayor of New York in 1965 on the promise that he would hack away at the influence of the various “power brokers” he believed were leading New York toward stagnation and preventing minority groups from gaining their rightful place in the city. Education was one of those areas in which Lindsay was eager to make change. He believed deeply in the obligations owed by the privileged to the most vulnerable. The governing philosophy of his administration, expressed by one of his aides, was “those who have nothing or those who have the least should get the most even if it is everything you have.” But in many instances, those who bore the burden of Lindsay’s policies were not wealthy Manhattnautes, but middle- and working-class whites living in the outer boroughs.

Black New Yorkers had been protesting the conditions in city schools since the early 1960s. But the beginning of the actual Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy was a more mundane attempt on the part of the Lindsay administration to get more state funding for city schools. If it could break up the single mammoth city school district and treat each borough as the separate county that it actually was, the Lindsay administration believed, the entire city would be eligible for tens of millions more dollars a year from Albany.

In 1967, Lindsay created the Mayor’s Advisory Panel on Decentralization of the New York City Schools to recommend an administrative overhaul of the school system. In a move with deep significance, Lindsay named McGeorge Bundy to head the panel. Bundy, a Boston Brahmin, had served as national-security adviser to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson before taking over the Ford Foundation. There was no representative of the teachers’ union on the panel, or
African Americans vs. American Jews

Commentary

Experimental school districts where a limited version of community control by creating three experimental school districts and a central education agency. The problems of inner-city schools, argued the Bundy Report, were the problems of an unresponsive school bureaucracy. Bringing control over education back to neighborhoods and communities would reform the school system. The Bundy Report was only an advisory document. The Lindsay administration needed to get legislation through in Albany to implement it. It went nowhere. Lindsay simply did not possess the political skills to secure such a dramatic reform.

And while Lindsay and Bundy's elite commission was debating the theoretical future of city schools, New Yorkers closer to the ground were also debating similar ideas. New York's black community had become deeply frustrated with the condition of inner-city schools. In 1964, local civil-rights leaders led by the Reverend Milton Galamison organized a one-day boycott of city schools to protest the slow pace of integration. In 1966, Galamison led a takeover of the Board of Education, with his allies declaring themselves the “Peoples’ Board.”

If anything, city schools were becoming more segregated in the 1960s. The percentage of African Americans in New York City had increased from 6 percent in 1940 to nearly 20 percent in 1968. By 1963, minority children represented 40 percent of all students in the public schools. Most African Americans were stuck in inner-city neighborhoods, and their schools were becoming increasingly all-black. The number of schools with a minority population of more than 90 percent grew from 8 percent in 1955 to 28 percent in 1968. White flight from the outer boroughs made the trends worse as the white student population declined between 1957 and 1964, from 65 percent to 43 percent in the Bronx and from 72 percent to 54 percent in Brooklyn. Outer-borough high schools that had been integrated in 1960 found themselves becoming overwhelmingly minority in just a few years due to white flight.

With integration becoming increasingly difficult and “black power” gaining influence, some in the African-American community began to argue that the way forward was not integration but “community control” of the schools. The black community would create the school curriculum, hire teachers and staff, and have control over the budget.

In April 1967, independent of the Bundy Panel, the city's Board of Education attempted to appease advocates of community control by creating three experimental school districts where a limited version of community control could be tested. Local elected school boards would hire an administrator to run the schools in each district. But “the basic functional relationships would remain the same” in terms of how these districts related to the Board of Education.

One of these districts was in a predominately black and Puerto Rican neighborhood in Harlem. Another was a lower-Manhattan district with a mix of low-income Asian, Hispanic, black, and some white students. The third was Ocean Hill–Brownsville. Lindsay aides later recognized that choosing three low-income, mostly minority districts was a mistake. “In choosing three of the most-deprived neighborhoods of the city, instead of selecting at least one middle-income area where the experiment would not pit black against white,” Lindsay aide Barry Gottehrer later wrote, “the confrontation, in retrospect, was inevitable.”

The Board of Education did not provide additional funds for these districts, so Bundy's Ford Foundation filled the gap. In 1967 and 1968, Ford gave more than 1 million dollars in grant money to the three experimental districts and other community control-related projects, including $160,000 to the Reverend Galamison's church for “programs to inform and assist communities to establish close relationships with NYC schools.”

DEEP INSIDE Brooklyn, Ocean Hill–Brownsville had been predominantly Jewish well into the 1950s, home to the young Norman Podhoretz, Alfred Kazin, and Henry Roth, not to mention the notorious gangsters of Murder, Inc. But the area changed rapidly, and by 1968, it was 95 percent black and Puerto Rican. The Jews that remained were often the owners of small businesses unable to relocate. They aroused the ire of the newer residents who saw them as symbols of white authority.

Another such symbol was the cohort of mostly Jewish teachers in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville public schools, members of the fledgling United Federation of Teachers (UFT), which had become the school system's bargaining agent in 1961. The Jewish teachers and their black Ocean Hill–Brownsville pupils represented both the successes and failures of the New York City public-school system. The teachers, themselves the product of that system, were the beneficiaries of a competitive Board of Examiners testing apparatus that offered opportunities for career advancement and material gain.

But their black students, often recent arrivals in the neighborhood, appeared doomed. For them, the idea of the public schools as an escalator of upward mobility was a cruel joke. Ocean Hill–Brownsville's Junior High School 271 was one of the worst-performing...
in the city, with 73 and 85 percent of its pupils testing below grade level in reading and math, respectively. Only 2 percent of its graduates qualified for admission to one of the city’s specialized high schools that sat at the top of the system’s meritocratic pyramid. Interactions between teachers and pupils at JHS 271 and the other Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools sometimes degenerated into violence, with a rising level of assaults against educational personnel there.

Lindsay, whose personal experience with whites outside Manhattan was perfunctory and who, in the words of a contemporary observer, “doesn’t understand the life of a mailman or a cop,” appeared to view municipal politics as a zero-sum game in which the gains of the city’s middle class had come at the expense of the minority poor. To Lindsay, New York’s public-sector unions and the white ethnic groups that predominated in them were self-interested impediments to racial justice in the city. In contemporary lingo, Lindsay saw these working-class whites as deeply laden with “white privilege.”

Albert Shanker, the grim-visaged UFT president, was the labor leader Lindsay liked least, a sentiment fully reciprocated by the Queens-bred son of Russian-Jewish immigrants. Lindsay viewed the brusque Shanker as déclassé, vulgar, and worse; he was the only person whom Mary Lindsay, the city’s first lady, banned from the private living quarters at Gracie Mansion, the mayor’s official residence. At one point during negotiations at City Hall, Shanker deeply offended Lindsay’s sense of decorum by putting his feet on the mayor’s desk and revealing his sagging socks. To the Lindsay people, Shanker and his union failed their test of selflessness and concern for the public interest. They were simply “power brokers” looking to put their own power ahead of the public good. One mayoral aide called Shanker “a terrible, terrible person,” while another remembers Lindsay calling Shanker an “evil man.”

But to Shanker, Lindsay was the embodiment of every upper-crust Protestant, reeking of moral sanctimony and a whiff of genteel anti-Semitism, who had looked down at him and “his kind” for generations. Lindsay and Shanker’s incompatibilities would impart an ethnocultural sting to the events to come at Ocean Hill–Brownsville and beyond.

DURING THE SUMMER of 1967, a local board composed of local residents was elected, which in turn chose Rhody McCoy, the principal of a special service school for emotionally disturbed children, as the experiment’s administrator. McCoy, a black nationalist and an admirer of Malcolm X’s, immediately clashed with white UFT representatives over the parameters of the local board’s powers, which had been vaguely defined (probably deliberately so) by the Board of Education. The union and McCoy squabbled throughout the 1967–68 academic year: Who controlled the content of the school curriculum? Who controlled the selection of administrators? Most important, who controlled the hiring and firing of teachers? McCoy argued that if “community control” meant anything at all, it meant that the people of Ocean Hill–Brownsville, speaking through their elected local board and through him, could select the men and women who would teach their children.

Shanker and the UFT had different views. The union membership was heavily invested in the Board of Examiners system, which employed race-blind standards of merit to select and advance teachers. What McCoy and the local board proposed to do was a potential body blow, not just to their livelihoods but also to the very value system by which they governed their professional lives. Shanker believed it was an existential threat to his union.

Founded in 1960, the UFT was struggling to establish a voice in the management of the public-school system after decades of teacher disempowerment. Shanker believed that if a local school board could decide unilaterally who would teach in its schools, the UFT would be a union in name only. He also worried about the racial and ethnic implications of the UFT’s dispute with McCoy and the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board. The board was almost all nonwhite. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville teaching cohort was predominantly white and Jewish. JHS 271 was already becoming a racial powder keg. The school’s black teachers, led by Leslie Campbell, later known as Jitu Weusi, had begun to self-segregate from their white counterparts. The day following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. on April 4, 1968, pupils left their classrooms, attacked teachers, and destroyed school property. Campbell, at a memorial service for King, told students: “You’ve got to get your minds together. You know who to steal from. If you steal, steal from those who have it. Stop fighting among yourselves.”

One month later, Shanker’s fears were realized. On May 7, the local board, along with McCoy, met and selected 19 Ocean Hill–Brownsville educators to receive letters of “termination of employment.” All were union members. All except one were white (one black teacher was mistakenly included on the list). All but a handful of the teachers were Jewish.

The letters turned the simmering controversy into a citywide crisis. It drew stark battle lines. Most of
Manhattan supported the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board and the community-control experiment. For professional elites in business, media, academia, and politics, the opportunity to exhibit empathy for impoverished African-American children in a distant neighborhood in their battle against white middle-class civil servants was an almost irresistible form of what today would be called “virtue signaling.” Their support for African Americans at Ocean Hill–Brownsville announced, in the parlance of the 1960s, that they “gave a damn,” without the necessity of personal sacrifice.

The minority poor in Manhattan and elsewhere in the city had a more personal and immediate reason to back McCoy and the local board: racial solidarity. Outer-borough whites aligned with Shanker and the UFT. This was in part an expression of support for other unionists, since Shanker argued that “a union is worth nothing if it fails to defend the rights of its members to their jobs.”

But the more powerful motivations were racial. The terminations at Ocean Hill–Brownsville set in motion forces that would eventually transform the political and social landscape of the city. For decades, that landscape had been defined by the rivalry between Jews and white Catholics. Separated by ethnic, religious, and cultural chasms that appeared unbridgeable, their New Yorks intersected, when they did at all, uncomfortably and awkwardly.

“There is probably a wider gap between Jews and Catholics in New York today than in the days of Al Smith,” Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan wrote in Beyond the Melting Pot in 1963. The competing value systems they described—cosmopolitan and rationalist for Jews, and traditional and religious for Catholics—had taken on sturdy lives of their own. Yet even as Glazer and Moynihan were writing, the beginnings of a thaw between Jews and Catholics in New York and beyond could be detected. New York Archbishop Francis Cardinal Spellman spoke out frequently against anti-Semitism and discrimination and cultivated friends and allies in the Jewish community. More significantly, in the early 1960s, Spellman would join other cardinals in crafting the Second Vatican Council’s revised teachings on the relationship of Catholics toward Jews and other non-Christians. By 1968, the teacher terminations ordered by the local board at Ocean Hill–Brownsville only furthered the rapprochement between Catholics and Jews.

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis also highlighted the split within New York’s Jewish community. More affluent Jews living in Manhattan increasingly came to identify with the interests and ideology of non-Jewish liberals. These more affluent Jews felt a growing distance toward their less-well-to-do co-religionists living in the outer boroughs, who were less concerned with theoretical ideas of social justice and more concerned about the actual conditions of their neighborhoods and schools. These apprehensive outer-borough Jews looked for help where they could find it. With Mayor Lindsay and Manhattan elites, not to mention virtually the entire black community, either actively demanding the removal of the teachers or indifferent to their plight, it was clear that assistance would have to come from elsewhere.

It did. It came from Italian, Irish, and East European Catholics who identified with Jews on the basis of growing concerns over rising crime rates, burgeoning welfare costs, deteriorating neighborhoods, and educational anarchy—as symbolized by the Ocean Hill–Brownsville terminations themselves. Their differences over forms of religious worship and the venality of machine politicians became much less significant. Where Jews saw Jewish teachers victimized at Ocean Hill–Brownsville, white Catholics saw white ones. After May 1968, these perspectives would meld into a powerful electoral force in city life. White Catholics and Jews were two-thirds of New York’s 1968 population. Together, they could elect a mayor who would “give a damn”—about them.
AFTER THE TERMINATIONS were announced, both sides dug in their heels. McCoy vowed that the fired teachers would never set foot in the Ocean Hill–Brownsville schools again. Shanker threatened a citywide strike if they were not reinstated. Over the summer, a trial examiner ruled that the teachers at the heart of the dispute had not been given due-process protections and had been dismissed without cause. He ordered their return to the classrooms. McCoy and the local board defied him. Lindsay, openly sympathetic to the community-control experiment, hesitated to put the full power of his office behind the trial examiner’s ruling. When he could not obtain ironclad assurances from Lindsay or the Board of Education that the Ocean Hill–Brownsville teachers would be reinstated with classroom assignments, Shanker called a walkout on September 9, 1968, the opening day of the new school year. This first strike lasted for only two days but was followed by a second strike on September 13 that lasted another 17 days, at which time Lindsay cut a deal with Shanker to bring the teachers back to the classroom and install neutral observers in Ocean Hill–Brownsville to prevent their harassment. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville Board had been left out of the negotiations and felt aggrieved as the decision appeared to weaken the community-control experiment. Tensions between UFT teachers and the board, as well as the replacement teachers hired by the board (many of whom were young left-wing activists), increased and eventually led to the third and longest strike, which lasted from October 14 to November 17.

The strikes were the most racially incendiary in the city’s history, filled with charges of bigotry and anti-Semitism that swept through New York like a virus. It is hard to exaggerate the ill will that the strikes generated. The urban historian Fred Siegel has called Ocean Hill–Brownsville “a conflict so intense that it was described in apocalyptic terms at the time.” With nearly a million students missing weeks of school and working parents scrambling to make sure their children were being supervised, the city was in chaos. But there was a deeper ideological conflict that also drove the crisis and inflamed tensions.

As the strikes intensified, Lindsay receded into the background and the controversy boiled down to a battle between Shanker’s UFT against McCoy and the OHB governing board. It was a battle over political power, but also over ideology. Shanker and the UFT saw the world in universalist, color-blind terms. Most teachers were traditional liberals who believed in civil rights and integration. They believed in due process, merit, and the promise of equality of opportunity. They were proud of what their union had achieved for its members.

McCoy and his supporters saw the world through a completely different lens. Imbued with ideas of black nationalism, they supported race-based policies in the hiring of teachers and pushed for a strongly Afrocentric curriculum. They were skeptical of middle-class notions of merit and equal opportunity and saw the mostly white teachers as succeeding on the backs of the black community. Concerns about violence in schools and student misbehavior were not, they believed, a matter of discipline but instead an issue of white teachers’ forcing middle-class values on black students. Deeply suspicious of the white community and the city’s political establishment, community-control supporters could sometimes descend into extremist rhetoric and paranoia. While Shanker’s UFT wanted to teach children “to make it within our society,” McCoy and the African-American Teachers Association (ATA) called for a “black value system” and racial separatism. This conflict in values could not be bridged in any meaningful way within the context of city politics at the time, and it highlighted the shat-

MONTHS AFTER THE STRIKES CONCLUDED, AN EXHIBIT ENTITLED ‘HARLEM ON MY MIND’ OPENED AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART. ITS CATALOGUE, WRITTEN BY HARLEM RESIDENTS, STATED, ‘OUR CONTEMPT FOR THE JEW MAKES US FEEL MORE COMPLETELY AMERICAN.’
tering of the postwar ideological consensus after the 1960s and the polarizing politics that has succeeded it. Although the most militant community-control supporters, including Campbell, McCoy, JHS 271 assistant principal Albert Vann, and Brooklyn CORE leader Robert “Sonny” Carson, insisted that their animus toward the terminated teachers was not a function of their religion or ethnicity—they were merely whites who happened to be Jewish—they attacked the educators, or acquiesced in attacks on them, as Jews. Advocates for the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board among Manhattan elites either wished away expressions of anti-Semitism or dismissed them as isolated and exaggerated. Lindsay in particular viewed them as red herrings, distractions from what was for him the “real” issue of community control. But his attitude smacked of victim-blaming. Anti-Semitism before, during, and after the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes was real and deeply disturbing.

Equally so was the failure of most of the city’s black leadership to denounce it. The stage had been set in December 1967 when John Hatchett, a public-school teacher and a member of the African-American Teachers Association, published an article entitled “The Phenomenon of the Anti-Black Jews and the Black Anglo-Saxon: A Study in Educational Perfidy” in the organization’s newsletter. Hatchett charged that Jewish teachers were guilty of “horrendous abuse of the (black) family, associates and culture” and had “educationally castrated” black students. The ATA would be a thorn in the side of the UFT both during and after the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes. Its members appeared fixated on the Jewishness of their adversaries in the union. ATA officer and JHS 271 assistant principal Albert Vann argued that the Jewish teachers who had received termination letters should be “responsible” Jews and voluntarily leave their jobs. At the height of the third and final strike in November, the ATA issued a screed in its newsletter against “the Jew, our great liberal friend of yesteryear, whose cries of anguish still resound from the steppes of Russia to the tennis courts of Forest Hills...who keeps our children ignorant.”

The most egregious instance of anti-Semitism during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis came in the form of an unsigned letter placed in the mailboxes of UFT teachers at JHS 271 during one of the brief periods they were back in the classroom. It read in part:

If African American History and Culture is to be taught to our Black Children it Must be Done By African Americans who Identify With And Who Understand The Problem. It is Impossible For The Middle East Murderers of Colored People to Possibly Bring To This Important Task The Insight, The Concern, The Exposing Of The Truth That is a Must If The Years Of Brainwashing And Self-Hatred That Has Been Taught To Our Black Children By Those Bloodsucking exploiters and Murderers Is To Be Over Come.

The source of this material was never definitively established. Nonetheless, a furious Shanker had hundreds of thousands of copies made and circulated them citywide. Supporters of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board sought to minimize the letter’s importance and faulted Shanker for publicizing it. Their argument has lived on in subsequent accounts of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis written from a left-wing perspective. They argue that Shanker overstated the extent of anti-Semitism at Ocean Hill–Brownsville to bolster the UFT’s cause in the city’s Jewish community.

Had the letter been an isolated instance, this argument would have merit. But this was not the case. It was of a piece with the utterances and writings of ATA members, as well as with the casual dismissal of the anti-Semitism issue by most black leaders, including McCoy, who said, “We have more important things to be concerned about than making anti-Semitism a priority.” It thus rises to the level of moral equivalence with articulations of anti-black racism during the strikes, which were often expressed indirectly and behind closed doors. A few weeks after the strikes concluded, ATA member and JHS 271 teacher Leslie Campbell appeared on radio station WBAI and read a poem composed by an Ocean Hill–Brownsville student “dedicated” to Albert Shanker, which began: “Hey, Jew boy, with that yarmulke on your head / You pale faced Jew boy—I wish you were dead.” Campbell defended the poem at the time, and indeed for the rest of his life, as an authentic expression of racial pain.

A month after the WBAI broadcast, an exhibit entitled “Harlem on My Mind” opened at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Its catalogue, written by Harlem residents, stated, “Our contempt for the Jew makes us feel more completely American in sharing a national prejudice,” and “Behind every hurdle that the Afro-American has yet to jump, stands the Jew who has already cleared it.” The museum’s director, Thomas Hoving, an Upper East Side liberal and former Lindsay Parks Commissioner, defended the language as “anything but racist” and “true.” “So be it,” he concluded grandly, as if to settle the issue of anti-Semitism from above. While pressure from Jewish groups and presumably major Jewish benefactors of his museum forced Hoving to withdraw the catalogue, his words were emblematic of the use of
both class and ethnocultural discriminations to secure racial peace in New York.

The existence of anti-Semitism at Ocean Hill–Brownsville was an embarrassment to Manhattan elite supporters of the community-control experiment and the local board. Some of these supporters were themselves Jewish, and it is not surprising that they sought to downplay its significance. But it was difficult to dismiss what a post-strike report issued by the Anti-Defamation League termed “crisis level” anti-Semitism in New York City. Responsibility thus lies not with Albert Shanker and his mimeograph machines, but with John Hatchett, Leslie Campbell, Albert Vann, and those in both the black and white communities who were silent or indifferent in the face of it.

AFTER KEEPING HIS TEACHERS out for a total of 37 days between September and November 1968, Shanker finally broke Lindsay’s will. On November 17, the exhausted parties—which did not include representatives of the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board—announced a settlement that gave the UFT most of what it had sought. The terminated teachers were reinstated and the local board placed under state supervision. The sense of betrayal among community-control supporters was deep. Galamison would say that there were times he thought Lindsay “would have gladly put every resident of Ocean Hill in a gunny sack and dropped them in the East River.” Even more extreme, one of the intellectual godfathers of community control, activist Preston Wilcox, called the final settlement “an attempt to rape Black people of the opportunity to control their own destinies.” So much of Lindsay’s mayoralty had been based on the idea of expanding opportunities for minorities, as well as keeping the city from erupting into chaos. When it came to the strikes and the community-control experiments, he failed on both accounts.

Things only got worse in 1969 when New York’s state legislature passed a school-decentralization law, supported by the UFT, that effectively ended the Ocean Hill–Brownsville community-control project. The legislation created about 30 new, smaller community districts within the city. Each district would be governed by an elected community school board, but within the overall structure and control of the Board of Education. Afterward, turnout for community-board elections would regularly run in the single digits, and many community boards became notorious for corruption and incompetence.

Partially as punishment for Lindsay’s iniquity during the crisis, the state legislature took control of the city’s education system away from City Hall. Lindsay went from appointing all members of the Board of Education to appointing only two. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville debacle thereby managed to kill any possibility of education reform in the city for the next 30 years. During those decades, the city’s schools experienced a continued decline in quality. The real losers in the controversy were public-school children of all races and ethnicities who were now condemned to continue their education in increasingly substandard schools. This would begin to change when Rudolph Giuliani successfully fought to regain mayoral control over city schools and Michael Bloomberg began to use that mayoral control to implement serious education reforms.

The Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis worked a sea change in Jewish attitudes toward African Americans and other ethnic whites in New York. A post-strike Harris Poll revealed sharp divisions between Jews and blacks and a convergence of views among Jews and white Catholics. By margins of 63 to 8, and 48 to 9 percent, respectively, Jews and white Catholics supported the UFT during the strikes. Blacks favored the Ocean Hill–Brownsville local board by 50 to 14 percent. Jews believed blacks had engaged in anti-Semitism during the crisis by 66 to 12 percent. White Catholics agreed, 40 to 20 percent. Blacks, by a margin of 40 to 23 percent, denied the presence of anti-Semitism. By a margin of 2 to 1, Jews believed that blacks and not Catholics were the main sources of anti-Semitism in the city. “Seven out of ten Jews, Italians, and Irish in New York have clearly joined cause,” the Harris Poll concluded. “It is almost as if blacks and whites are living in different worlds instead of the same city.”

The new racial and cultural alignments had immediate political effects. During the 1969 mayoral election campaign, a desperate Lindsay, who had been booted off the stage of a Brooklyn synagogue by angry congregants during the crisis amid chants of “Lindsay must go,” sought to mend fences with outer-borough Jews, admitting to vaguely defined “miscalculations” and “mistakes.” It was not enough to sway them. In a result that would have been unthinkable even four years earlier, 55 percent of Jewish voters cast ballots for one of the two Catholic Italian-American candidates opposing Lindsay, Democrat Mario Procaccino and Republican John Marchi. Both were social and cultural conservatives. Lindsay, who ran on the Liberal Party ticket after losing the Republican primary to Marchi, drew enough votes from Manhattanites and minorities to exploit the divisions among his rivals and win reelection by a plurality.
His 1969 reelection was merely a temporary victory for Lindsay, who would shortly after switch to the Democratic Party. His second term proved just as divisive as his first; crime and disorder continued to take their toll, the city's population continued to decline, and a slowing economy put added pressure on New York's fragile fiscal situation, eventually leading to a massive budgetary crisis in 1975. Ocean Hill–Brownsville was a perfect example of the failures of Lindsay and modern liberalism: Promise a lot and deliver little to nothing, while exacerbating deep-seated tensions. Lindsay was personally committed to civil rights and to improving the lives of minorities in New York, but in reality, after his eight years as mayor, the condition of most black New Yorkers was substantially worse than it had been when he was first elected.

Ocean Hill–Brownsville had shifted the tectonic plates beneath the city's political landscape. Henceforth it would be race, rather than religion, ethnicity, or class, that would determine outer-borough Jewish electoral allegiances. Many historians have oversimplified this shift, dismissing it as a Jewish embrace of “white” identity, as well as a rejection of what they assume was a “natural” Jewish racial liberalism. But it is more accurately viewed as a natural impulse toward self-preservation. The Jews of Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx saw their co-religionists attacked not just as whites but also as Jews, in base, crude language that evoked painful memories of the Holocaust, then only two decades in the past. Manhattan elites and black community leaders whom they expected to speak out forcefully against this language did not do so.* Under the circumstances, it is hardly surprising that outer-borough Jews sought a safe harbor with sympathetic white Catholics.

For many contemporary historians, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville story is an example of the extension of the civil-rights movement to northern cities—and its failures are cited as proof of the intransigence of northern white racism in its unwillingness to deal with the discrimination and inequality faced by African Americans. That is a narrow and simplistic view that ignores both the complexities of the community-control struggle as well as the many miscalculations and strategic errors of both white liberals and African-American community-control advocates. Modern liberalism believes in the all-powerful explanatory power of “white racism,” but while it explains many things, it does not explain all things. Ocean Hill–Brownsville shows how real history cannot be so neatly summed up by those two words.

The complexities do not stop there. For John Lindsay and McGeorge Bundy were correct in many of their criticisms. The city's education bureaucracy was sclerotic and self-serving, best revealed even today by Bel Kaufman's extraordinary novel *Up the Down Staircase*. And black parents were also correct that their children were not getting the quality education they deserved and that parents should demand more voice in their children's education.

The UFT was also correct that the due-process rights of its members were being ignored under community control and that white, mostly Jewish, teachers were being scapegoated for the failures of urban schools—often in anti-Semitic and anti-white language. But Ocean Hill–Brownsville showed the ultimate power of Shanker and the UFT, a power that would only grow. Today, teachers' unions around the country are the backbone of the Democratic Party and contemporary liberalism. As in the 1960s, the teachers' unions vehemently oppose attempts at education

* Civil-rights and labor leaders Bayard Rustin and A. Philip Randolph, who condemned expressions of anti-Semitism during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville strikes, were notable exceptions in this regard.
reform. But unlike the situation in the 1960s, many of those reforms, such as charter schools, school choice, education standards, and testing, are often pushed by conservative and centrist politicians. While the teachers' unions of the 1960s foreshadowed some of the growth of neoconservative disillusionment with liberalism, today's teachers' unions are firmly on the left politically and ideologically.

Regardless of where the teachers' unions are politically today, the Ocean Hill–Brownsville controversy does provide a window into our own tortured political situation. The battle over community control and the subsequent teachers' strikes show the pernicious and poisonous effects of a top-down political coalition. The roots of those politics date back to Lindsay's New York and have come into full bloom in our own time. Neither Lindsay nor Bundy were products of public schools and would never send their own children to them. Yet they were willing to impose their agenda on schools in an effort to protect their own interests. The ultimate costs of their meddling would never be borne by their friends and colleagues, but rather by those working and middle-class New Yorkers whom Lindsay and his allies held in barely concealed contempt.

Those in the Manhattan managerial and professional classes who decried the choices Jews made during the Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis believed that their own interests lay with community control as a means of maintaining social stability and racial peace. “What you have,” Shanker argued perceptively after the strikes, “is people on the upper economic level who are willing to make any change that does not affect their own position. And so it is the middle-class interests that are narrow and selfish and the civil-service teacher who must be sacrificed. I'm not sure this is a WASP attitude. I think it is only human. But what if you said give 20 percent of Time, Inc. or U.S. Steel to blacks? Who would be narrow then?”

Liberal politics today is largely driven by a coalition of elite white professionals, whether called the “coastal elites” or the gentry class. Their rhetoric and virtue-posturing notwithstanding, they seem both disconnected from the minority poor they claim to represent and hostile to a middle-class America that embarrasses them. The Ocean Hill–Brownsville crisis offers an early glimpse of what happens when a group becomes generous with the lives and well-being of others but stingy with their own. This is probably its most enduring legacy: a reminder that whether it be a John Lindsay yesterday or a Bill de Blasio today, those who profess to “give a damn” speak of thee, not of me.▶️
BY ELLIOT KAUFMAN

BY MY SECOND WEEK at Stanford, I knew only three things: I was unable to drink alcohol responsibly, I didn't really like my new friends, and supporting Israel was going to be a drag. I couldn't escape the posters screaming about Israeli settler colonialism and human-rights abuses. They were plastered on the backs of the bathroom stall doors, right at eye level for the seated occupant. Even in the safest of spaces, there was nowhere else to look.

The posters had five bullet points. The first squarely connected Israel to American police violence. “Israel trains U.S. police how to deal with black people the way its occupation forces deal with Palestinians,” it read. The second bullet point explained that Israeli airstrikes deliberately target Palestinian women and children. The third accused Israel of systematically sterilizing African immigrants to reduce its black population. The fourth laid out religious discrimination against gays in Israel. The fifth linked the technology behind the Israeli “apartheid fence” to U.S. efforts to “hunt down undocumented migrants.”

The posters were the work of Stanford Out of Occupied Palestine, a rainbow coalition of 19 student organizations, including the Black Student Union, MEChA (a large, radical Latino student group), the NAACP, Stanford Students for Queer Liberation, Stanford American Indian Association, the First Generation and/or Low-Income Partnership, and so on. Their opposition was the Coalition for Peace. This was an odd kind of coalition, consisting of only one group: The Jewish Student Association.

Fellow students explained the disparity as the natural result of the sympathy from the marginalized for the marginalized. No doubt that is partly true. But what I saw that year, in 2014, was a well-oiled machine whose leaders were able to whip their constituent groups into action and frame the issue as the weak versus the strong, the weak versus the Jews. Defection from the anti-Israel cause meant not only abandoning one’s group and facing real personal costs, but also becoming a servant to power. I had just been introduced to intersectionality and witnessed its grip on the American campus.

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INTERSECTIONALITY theory was formalized in an academic paper. The critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw wrote in 1989 that a rigid separation of racism and sexism blinded American antidiscrimination law to the experiences of black women who had faced something more than the sum of each bigotry. Yet treating intersectionality as an argument gives it too little, and at the same time too much, credit. Intersectionality needs to be understood first as a model of political organizing, second as a conspiracy, and only third as a theory.

Intersectionality is used to tear down an older model of political organizing, what Crenshaw calls the “trickle-down approach to social justice.” The trickle-down model rallied around feminism, promising that its achievements would eventually empower black women. It rallied around opposition to exploitation, assuming its victories would eventually reach poor people of color. The left that Crenshaw helped build considers these promises hopelessly broken. Fighting prejudices separately misses the true “intersectional experience.” That is, the racism and sexism that afflict black women are suffered as a unified experience. In this crucial but ineffable sense, racism and sexism can be said to merge into one.

As the International Socialist Review helpfully notes, this insight “has enormous significance at the very practical level of movement building.” Since “oppressions work together in producing injustice,” according to the summary of black feminist scholar Patricia Hill Collins, intersectionality has the effect of making solidarity a prerequisite of consciousness. In other words, one cannot be a full participant in the effort to secure social justice if one is a mere feminist or anti-racist. In fact, the anti-racist who fails to consider the special suffering of people of color who are gay or Palestinian is hardly an anti-racist at all. He must champion every left-wing cause as they all overlap. Different types of bigotry combine to threaten vulnerable people at their junctions.

Groups that can consistently mobilize their members to rally and vote do not just win but dominate campus politics, imposing their will on the ambivalent majority, most of whom will adopt whatever political view is least costly in their social circles. Though the situation is not uniform across the country, on elite campuses, the only group able to achieve this level of mobilization is the intersectional coalition of minority groups.

Jewish students, however, contest the intersectional coalition’s exercise of power. Sensing that their interests are threatened, the students adopt a defensive posture, parrying unprovoked attacks against Israel. Often, they seek to debate the enemy they do not want into deescalating hostilities. This is unlikely to succeed.

Intersectionality begins with identity über alles. Of course, a member of a marginalized group does not need to be told that she shares interests, histories, and experiences with her fellow group members. But intersectionality tells her anyway, stressing the integrity and community of the group and subgroup again and again. Already swimming with the current, its practitioners use ethnic and racial student groups, community centers, courses, majors, events, freshmen orientations, mentorship programs, and even themed dormitories to sort incoming freshmen into their identity group. These students, many of whom feel quite vulnerable, as they are 18 years old and away from their families and friends, are grateful for soft social landing spots with peers from similar backgrounds.

Strict sorting positions each group as a cog in a political machine. Shaped into cohesive units, identity groups can be organized and led credibly from above by one of their own. On a campus where identity groupings have become primary elements in the overall social network, opposing the group position is then framed as siding with the same force of injustice that is the group’s enemy. For this reason, defection becomes nearly unthinkable, no matter how unrelated the issue seems (black queers for Palestine?). In this way, racial and ethnic leaders are able to deliver votes and numbers to the coalition.

N MY FRESHMAN YEAR, the intersectional anti-Israel activists had plenty of ideas. The Native Americans, for example, cast Zionism as a continuation of the settler colonialism that had ravaged their community. We countered that Jews were indigenous to the land, but it didn’t matter. This was not a debate. It was simple coalition politics.

The Native American student group, along with those of the black, Latino, Muslim, and Asian communities, is part of the Students of Color Coalition (SOCC). This is Stanford’s dominant political machine. Every year, SOCC endorses a dozen candidates for student council and, in exchange, requires them to campaign as a slate. The effect is to stop candidates from building independent political profiles, making them entirely dependent on the larger machine. It’s worth it for both sides: Every year since 2009, SOCC candidates have won a majority of the student council, and often a supermajority. Even in 2015, when it was dogged by allegations of anti-Semitism that were pub-
lished in the *New York Times*, SOCC still won nine of 15 possible council races. Year after year, its member groups out-organize the opposition and corral the votes of their racial and ethnic compatriots and their left-wing supporters in sufficient numbers to overwhelm an apathetic student body. These wins translate into more diversity administrators, sexual-assault trainings, money for community centers, and calls for a diverse faculty.

Remarkably, in 2014, the student council fell one vote short of the two-thirds majority it needed to pass a resolution calling for divestment from Israel. Two student-council members, one leftist Latina and one leftist Jew, had abstained and voted against the resolution, respectively. In short order, the activist communities of which they were part made clear that the offending members had only one path to avoid social ostracism. A week later, a re-vote was called, and before anyone knew what was happening, both students switched their votes. Defection from the intersectional coalition was too costly for them to bear.

INTERSECTIONALITY does not by itself explain the campus left's hatred for Israel. Decades ago, long before today's intersectional coalitions existed, Soviet and Arab anti-Zionist propaganda were popular on the left. There are, however, two facts worth noting about today's groups. First, they almost always include the Muslim Students' Association and Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP), both of which push the coalition to undertake anti-Israel action. SJP is also an extremely well-organized national group that can make the rest of the coalition's job easy by supplying its prepackaged divestment campaign.

Second, the coalition defines itself as the collection of marginalized groups. This leaves only two options for nonmember groups, such as whites and Jews: They become either part of the power structure or allies of the marginalized. The former is assumed because all whites benefit from skin-color privilege, but the latter can be earned.

As Mia McKenzie, the writer behind the popular website Black Girl Dangerous, explains, the key to being an ally is to “shut up and listen.” Articles about how to be an ally invariably begin here. They may say all the right things, but white allies still, quite literally, lack skin in the game. They remain privileged, able to defect to the power structure at any time, and their nonwhite partners know it.

This lingering suspicion requires white allies to humble themselves publicly and repeatedly before people of color. Accordingly, they confess their privilege, how they benefit from it, and how it is so baked into American society that they are irredeemably tainted and poisoned by it, despite their best efforts. The ally must show he subordinates his identity and interests and must pledge loyalty to the movement, its identities, and its interests. In the end, the intersectional movement has little to tell these students other than to confess their sins. But for the guilt-drenched modern conscience, that is more than enough. White students line up for these coveted roles, eager to profess their disgust with their identity.

Jewish students have it tougher. To subordinate themselves, it is not enough to condemn *whiteness*. They must also take on the ‘mainstream Jewish community’ and Israel itself. What other way can a Jew demonstrate her allegiance? If she refuses to forsake Israel, then she is just another hypocritical white liberal, happy to tout social justice until it threatens her own privilege. In this way, many otherwise progressive Jews reveal themselves to be bad allies. By putting Israel before the coalition, they appear to put themselves before the coalition, clinging to their place in the power structure.

The intersectional movement can interpret this Jewish intransigence in the way that it understands all opposition: as backlash from the power structure. Who else would oppose the oppressed but the oppressors? So when Jewish students organize against the intersectional coalition, they confirm that they do not fit in among the marginalized, an impression aided by their observable or presumed whiteness and wealth.

Treating opposition as aggression from the power structure is a means of manufacturing con-
cern for those who are opposed. Surely universities should not allow vulnerable minorities to be targeted and attacked—which is how the coalition understands the power structure's political mobilization aimed against it. This framing then justifies everything from classroom callouts to speech codes to shouting down speakers, behavior that has escalated on the left and collapsed on the right since 2013. The campus left claims to be exercising its right to self-defense, responding to your aggression.

If the marginalized are conceived as basically united, the temptation is strong to see the marginalizers as similarly united. Patricia Hill Collins writes, “Regardless of the particular intersections involved, structural, disciplinary, hegemonic, and interpersonal domains of power reappear across quite different forms of oppression.” What the marginalized are really fighting, in this view, is power, and power is fairly homogenous, even when it goes under different names. The oppressors of the Palestinians and the oppressors of black Americans, therefore, can be joined in the same system of power relations.

This theory can be vulgarized quite readily into a conspiracy. One need only conceive the power structure as a unit, undertaking coordinated action. It then appears to have many tentacles striking all over the world, to be exceedingly powerful and organized. But it’s also secretive and denies it has any diabolical plans. In other words, it starts to resemble the House of Rothschild, Henry Ford’s International Jew, or the Elders of Zion of the anti-Semitic imagination.

It is sadly axiomatic that those who perceive evil as residing in a single matrix or enemy will eventually blunder into anti-Semitism. At least some will eventually conflate that enemy with the Jews and that matrix with their supposed lackeys. This is how remarkably diverse conspiracy theories converge. And this convergence is always to the detriment of the Jews, who become synonymous with a power elite.

The intersectional coalition is vulnerable to this sort of conspiracy theorizing for three reasons. The first is tactical. To engage their diverse coalition, intersectional movements must exaggerate the unity and malevolence of its enemies. The unity helps show anti-sexual-assault activists, for example, that Israeli “apartheid” should be their issue, too, because of how it props up the same system of domination that inflicts violence on Palestinian and other women. The result is a picture of a uniquely wicked Jewish state lurking behind the world’s evils.

Second, on campus after campus, the intersectional coalition’s main opposition is composed of Jewish students. And when Jews are already the proximate tactical enemy, and the movement already sees itself as engaged in an epic struggle against the powerful, it is all too easy to conflate the Jews not only with Israel but also with the entire power structure, and blame them for all sorts of other things. Just ask the Palestinians.

Third, there is the uncomfortable fact that anti-Semitism in America is more common among racial minorities than among whites. The Anti-Defamation League’s most recent data on anti-Semitic attitudes confirm the longstanding trend. Twenty-three percent of African Americans were found to hold anti-Semitic attitudes, compared with only 14 percent of the general population and 10 percent of whites. U.S.-born Hispanics clock in at 19 percent, but the number for foreign-born Hispanics, not an insignificant group in America, is 31 percent. Even worse, the ADL Global 100 found that 34 percent of Muslim Americans hold anti-Semitic views.

All these challenges mean that intersectional movements should be extra vigilant in detecting the development of anti-Semitic conspiracy theory within their ranks. Unfortunately, intersectionality is endemically blind to anti-Semitism.

Consider Gabriel Knight, a Palestinian-American former member of Stanford’s student council. In
2016, he publicly defended talk of “Jews controlling the media, economy, government, and other societal institutions” as mere “questioning of potential power dynamics.” It is notable that, despite intense pressure, Stanford’s Students of Color Coalition refused to rescind its endorsement of Knight for reelection, even after other organizations had done so, and even after Knight pulled out of the election. Since Knight technically remained on the ballot, the powerful endorsement brought him close to winning.

Strict classification by identity makes Knight and other people of color members of the in-group, the coalition of the marginalized, while the Jews calling for him to step down are considered members of the out-group, the coalition of the dominant. This completely reverses the polarity of the situation. Knight becomes the plucky underdog, daring to punch up and challenge the power, which immediately reacts by destroying him. By default, punching up appears to be resistance to domination; punching down is seen as dangerous oppression and bigotry. Actions by Jews, who are considered to have power, can be interpreted as threatening, but most actions against them cannot. Consequently, the modern anti-Semite’s punching up at the powerful Jews, whether those in Israel, America, or Germany, is not seen as punching at all.

Comments by Tamika Mallory, co-founder of the Women’s March and a defender of Louis Farrakhan, are illustrative of the intersectional blind spot. Mallory castigated Starbucks for hiring the ADL to conduct anti-bias training for its employees, since “the ADL is CONSTANTLY attacking black and brown people.” This is how she sees it: the ADL—white, Jewish, respectable—versus poor Louis Farrakhan—black, Muslim, marginalized. Recognizing anti-Semitism from below requires using a lens that the intersectional movement simply lacks.

As I walk on Stanford’s campus today, three years after the intersectional divestment campaign of my freshman year, I pass SJP’s mock “apartheid wall.” Placed right in the center of our main plaza, it too cannot be missed.

On one side of the wall, in large letters, someone has written, “Respeta mi EXISTENCIA o espera mi RESISTENCIA.” The Black Power fist has been drawn directly below it. Something else is written next to it in Arabic. Farther over, “COREA for Justice in Palestine” has been plastered across a drawing of the map of both Koreas. Next is the slogan “From Palestine to Mexico, Those Walls Got To Go,” with both nations’ flags appended to the side. Below reads “APIs [Asian and Pacific Islanders] against APARTHEID” and “BORDERS—what’s up with that?” Back on the left, somebody wrote “End Gun Violence,” “Equality,” and “Black Lives Matter.”

As a piece of propaganda, this is pitiable stuff. “Equality” is generic and lame; “End Gun Violence” seems totally unrelated; the Mexican connection is laid on way too thick; and why exactly is Korea spelled in English with a “C”? The whole thing is a hodgepodge, the result of too many artists with too many markers.

But on closer inspection, there was just the right number of markers at work: one for every group. ME-ChA, the Latino student group, wrote the Spanish and drew the Mexican flag. The Black Student Union drew the fist. The Muslim Students’ Association contributed the Arabic. Even the Asian American Student Association got in on the action. Each identity group had added its own inward-directed slogan, signalling to its members that they were being implicated in the fight. Forget theory. It is on this basis—I’ll rally my people if you’ll rally yours—that the intersectional machine cooperates and wins.
Wit, Exile, Jew, Convert, Genius

The life and art of Heinrich Heine

By Joseph Epstein

Friendship, Love, the Philosopher's Stone,
These three things are ranked alone;
These I sought from sun to sun,
And I found—not even one.

— Heinrich Heine

Heinrich Heine was one of those writers, rare at any time, welcome always, who found it impossible to be dull. In everything he wrote, he captivated, sometimes infuriated, often dazzled. Heine, who was born in 1797 and died in 1856, wrote poetry, plays, criticism, essays, fiction, travel books, and journalism. All of it was marked by passion and wit, not a standard combination. “I hate ambiguous words,” he noted, “hypocritical flowers, cowardly fig-leaves, from the depth of my soul.” He thought himself, not incorrectly, in the line of Aristophanes, Cervantes, Molière. Matthew Arnold called Heine “the most important German successor and continuator of Goethe in Goethe’s most important line of activity...as ‘a soldier in the war of liberation of humanity’.”

George Eliot, that other great Victorian, wrote of Heinrich Heine that he was one of the most remarkable men of this age: no echo but a real voice...a surpassing poet, who has uttered our feelings for us in delicious song; a humorist, who touches leaden folly with the magic wand of the fine gold of art—who sheds his sunny smile on human tears, and makes them a beauteous rainbow on the cloudy background of life; a

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Heine did nothing directly to change the politics of his time. His talent lay in satire and polemic. He did not mind making enemies, and, more difficult still, he found ways to keep them.

wit, who holds in his mighty hand the most scorching of lightnings of satire; an artist in prose literature, who has shown even more completely than Goethe the possibilities of German prose; and—in spite of all the charges against him, true as well as false—a lover of freedom who has spoken wise and brave words on behalf of his fellow men.

H EINE SUFFERED the Chinese curse of having lived in interesting times. He was born while Napoleon, whom he much admired as a young man and once saw riding through the streets of Dusseldorf, was setting out to acquire his empire. He twice met Goethe. He knew Karl Marx, who admired his poetry more than Heine, in the end, admired Marx's politics. He was a friend to Balzac's, and probably a lover of George Sand. He lived through two revolutions, those of July 1830 and of February 1848. He was the victim of censorship under Metternich—a warrant for his arrest in Prussia was issued in 1835—the beneficiary of French freedom of expression, and a writer one of whose sidelines was informing each of those two always rivalrous nations about the other.

No nation ultimately met Heine's mark. He found the English self-satisfied, uninspired, and England itself made dull by the mercantile spirit. He held that the secret of the English superiority in politics "consists in the fact that they do not possess imagination." His native Germany was for him "the land of bigots," where patriotism consisted of "hatred of the French, hatred of civilization, and hatred of liberalism," and where "servility was in the German soul." The French, true enough, could be "not only the wittiest of nations, but also the most compassionate," yet French verse was for him "lukewarm rhymed gruel" and "Marseilles is French for Hamburg—a thing I cannot stand even in the best translation." America, which he never visited, he called "that monstrous prison of freedom...where the most repulsive of tyrants, the populace, holds vulgar sway" and "all men are equal—equal dolts...with the exception, naturally, of a few millions, who have a black or brown skin, and are treated like dogs.”

In May 1848, Heine took to his bed in his Paris apartment, the bed he subsequently called his "mattress grave," from which he never arose. There he would spend the last eight years of his life with a wretched illness caused by degeneration of the spine, which left him paralyzed from the chest down and blind in one of his eyes. He could avail himself of the other eye if were raised open by a finger. He suffered cramps and throbbing headaches and a wracking cough that only opium and morphine could relieve. Add in the tortures of 19th-century medicine. Through this wretched illness, Heine's passion for writing never subsided, and his best volume of verse, Romanzero, and much else was written from his mattress-grave.

As a thinker, Heine was neither deep nor strikingly original. He did not so much contribute to as dabble in philosophical and theological debates. He did nothing directly to change the politics of his time. In prose his talent lay in satire and polemic. He did not mind making enemies, and, more difficult still, he found ways to keep them. His verse could be lyrical and lilting but also coarse and profane. Yet even after one has said the worst about Heine, things that might destroy the reputation of any other writer, he cannot be diminished or otherwise disqualified. His spirit, which shone through all he wrote, was indomitable.

Remarking on Heine's book-length essay On the History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany, the scholar J.P. Stern begins by writing that "Heine had neither the scholarly equipment nor the detachment to write anything that a respectable historian would wish to put his name to." But Stern goes on to add that "so much of it is true, that so much of the book consists of brilliant, apparently casual and quite unexpected insights—that more truth and good sense is said here about certain important aspects of German history and culture, about the German mind, than any other single book I know—said implicitly and by innuendoes, but also explicitly, also in a grand rhetorical style." As for Heine's essays, Stern held that "only Nietzsche's have a comparable vigor." Nietzsche himself thought Heine Germany's greatest lyric poet.

H A RRY HEINE, as he was known before his fame, grew up as the oldest of four children in a petit-bourgeois Jewish family in Dusseldorf. The family was more sentimentally than religiously Jewish. Heine's father, Samson Heine, an amiable flop, was in the textile business, at which
he ultimately failed. His Uncle Salomon, a Hamburg banker, is said to have been one of the wealthiest men in Germany—and Heine spent a fair amount of calculating through his life in an only partially successful attempt to have this uncle underwrite his freelance career. His best biographer, Jeffrey L. Sammons, reports that Heine “held a paying position for only six months of his life.”

The great force in Heine's early life was his mother. She had many plans for her oldest son, none of which came to fruition. She first thought he might find his calling as a diplomat, then as a banker. His Uncle Salomon set him up in a textile business of his own. “A poet always cheats his boss,” a Russian proverb has it, only half true in this case since Heine did not cheat but, out of a want of interest, failed his uncle. He had neither the taste nor the least talent for commerce. Law school was the next option. Heine took up the study of the history of Roman law and German jurisprudence at the universities of Bonn, Berlin, and Gottingen, which left him bored blue. “If the Romans had been obliged to learn Latin,” he later remarked about the complexities of mastering the language, “they would never have conquered the world.” Heine never practiced law, either.

In 1825, Heine put himself through a conversion to Protestantism, for in the Prussia of that time Jews were not permitted to practice law or take up academic positions and were excluded from much else. He called his baptism as a Protestant “the ticket of admission to European culture,” though he would later remark that “if the Protestant church didn’t have an organ, it would be no religion at all,” and he expressed regret at having allowed himself to be baptized, however perfunctorily.

In Bonn, Heine encountered August Wilhelm Schlegel, one of the great German literary critics of his day, who instructed him in Romantic theory and taught him a good deal about German prosody while editing some of his youthful poems. At the University of Berlin, he attended the lectures of Hegel, whom he recalled speaking of God and the gods and “looking around anxiously, as if in fear that he might be understood.” He later called Hegel “the circumnavigator of the intellectual world, who has fearlessly advanced to the North Pole of thought, where one's brain freezes in abstract ice.” Only after subsequent reflection did Heine feel he came to true understanding of Hegelian thought, at which point he rejected it. Among his store of anecdotes, he liked to report that on his deathbed Hegel was supposed to have said, “Only one person has understood me,” then quickly added, “and he didn’t understand me, either.”

Despite his failures at conventional occupations, Heine's confidence in his poetic genius never flagged. His early fame came from his first collection, Book of Songs, the poetry from which is today best known from having been set to music by, among others, Robert Schumann, Franz Schubert, and Felix Mendelssohn. (By one estimate, Heine's early poems provided the lyrics to no fewer than 2,750 pieces of music.) Early in his career, Heine called poetry “a beautiful irrelevancy” and soon turned to prose, though through most of his life he produced both simultaneously. As in the very different case of T.S. Eliot, Heine's fame as a poet lent his prose additional authority.

J. P. Stern describes that prose as “a unique compound of the eternal raconteur's fun and the precise intellectual wit of the guest at the ideal High Table.” Stern wrote that his “lightness of touch, the effortless responsiveness of the medium, the quickness of the insights and the melodramatic sharp edges of Heine's expressiveness...all these are quite unprecedented in the annals of German prose.” Stern was particularly struck by “that ambiguity, that ironical illumination of the truth, which are his most successful stylistic device.” Karl Kraus, the 20th-century Viennese journalist and wit, attacked Heine's prose for its newfound informality, writing that “he loosened the bodice of the German language to the point where any clerk can today fondle her breasts.” Ernst Pawel, author of The Dying Poet, a brilliant little book on Heine's last years, wrote, correctly, that for Heine, “the poetry brought fame, the prose notoriety.”

Describing in his Memoirs a youthful kiss with the daughter of a professional executioner, Heine notes that “at that moment there flared up in me the first flames of two passions to which my subsequent life was to be devoted: the love of beautiful women and the love of the French Revolution.” For Heine, women were objects both of longing and contempt, and he by turns elevated and debased
Commentary

them, sometimes both at once. Two of the witticisms on women that Louis Untermeyer quotes in his introduction to his translation of Heine's poems: 1) “I will not say that women have no character; rather, they have a new one every day”; and 2) “Women have just one way of making us happy, but thirty thousand ways of making us miserable.”

The misery of unrequited love is the central theme of Heine's early poetry. “Madame,” he once said, “anyone who wants to be loved by me has to treat me like dirt.” For a long while, his chief unrequiting lover was supposed to be his cousin Amélie, the older of his wealthy Uncle Salomon's two daughters. In his biographical study, The Elusive Poet, Jeffrey Sammons convincingly dispels this story. Heine may have been interested in Amélie and later in her younger sister Thérèse, but if he had been, it was perhaps as much for their father's money as for their beauty or largeness of soul. Salomon Heine supplied his nephew Harry with an allowance all his days; after his death, the allowance—never sufficient in Heine's complaining opinion—was continued by Salomon's son Carl.

As for the requited loves in Heine's life, not all that much is known. He was a handsome man. In most drawings and paintings of him, many done in three-quarters profile, he resembles, if one can imagine it, a Jewish Lord Byron, with a slightly more emphatic nose and minus the clubfoot. When young, Heine took Byron for a model, both in his poetry and revolutionary fervor. In the Berlin salons of his youth, he was regarded as a German Byron.

Many of Heine's poems not devoted to the subject of unrequited love take up the subject of past lovers ultimately found inadequate. A characteristic quatrains on the theme runs:

The joy that kissed me yesterday
Today looks pale and sickly,
And every time I've known true love
It's faded just as quickly.

Yet, as Ernst Pawel writes, “Heine's actual love life appears to have been considerably less extravagant than, with an ostentatious show of discretion, he would have liked his public to believe.”

Heine's best poems have a satiric edge, taking up such subjects as how far Germany is from the Rome of Brutus. Others are prophetic, in one case of Hitler: “Where men burn books,” he wrote in his play Almansor, “they will burn people in the end.” As S.S. Prawer writes: “He was able to detect tendencies in his time whose full unfolding would not come until well over a full century later.”

Some of Heine's poetry could be erotic, some bordering on the obscene. Here is a two-quatrains sample from his “Song of Songs”:

A pair of polished epigrams—
The rosebuds of the breast;
A fair caesura lies between—
It adds a certain zest.

The heavenly sculptor shaped the thigh—
A parallel he drew.
The figleaf-veiled parenthesis
Has quite an interest too.

He wasn't bad at bawdy, either, as in the poem called “Castratis”:

The castratis all started out tut-tutting
As soon as I'd sung the first bar:
They complained (and were really quite cutting!)
That my tone was too ballsy by far.

At 37, Heine contracted a marriage that, unlike his putative love affair with George Sand, is perhaps best described as improbable. This was with a 19-year-old shopgirl named Crescence Eugénie Mirat. She was French and barely literate. In a letter to his mother, Heine wrote: “If she were smarter, I'd worry less about her future. Which again goes to show that stupidity is a gift of the gods, because it forces others to take care of you.” Mathilde, as he called her, never read anything he wrote, was scarcely aware that he was a writer of considerable fame, didn't know he was Jewish. Heine's efforts, à la Henry Higgins, to remake his wife, to educate and polish her, were apparently unavailing. He worried about her fidelity while he lived, and about her well-being after his death. She stayed with him through all his mattress-grave years, and there they were, the oddest of odd couples.
**The Problem with Heine.**

The problem with Heine," wrote Ernst Pawel, "is that no statement of his can ever be taken at face value." Nor is anything about him straightforward, uncomplicated, simple. This is partly owing to his rarely telling the truth about himself. "Heine," Robert C. Holub, editor of *A Companion to the Works of Heinrich Heine*, writes, "is an unreliable reporter about Heine." Théophile Gautier, Sainte-Beuve, Gérard de Nerval—all picked up on the contradictory nature of Heine. Here is Louis Untermeyer on the subject:

A German who dreamed of a greater Germany, he was an expatriate from his homeland and spent most of his life in France. A proudly race-conscious Jew, he became a Protestant and, after a liaison of seven years, married his Catholic mistress...The most dulcet of poets, he was also one of the bitterest and bawdiest; a born Romantic, he exposed the spectral hollowness of Romanticism. A cynical wit, he was a political idealist; a journalistic hack, a pot-boiling newspaper correspondent, he was at the same time an impassioned fighter for humanity.

Heine's contradictory spirit shows up in heightened form in his regard for his own Jewish-ness, which has been the subject of endless scholarly essays and a splendid 1986 book, S.S. Prawer's *Heine's Jewish Comedy*. Heine's conversion may have been without true religious conviction or significance, but for him it was, in retrospect, not a negligible act. The need for it, implying the inferior standing of the Jews in Prussia, angered him. Heine was German and Jewish both, but his true religion was that which promised human freedom. (In later years he showed anger at the conversion of Felix Mendelssohn: "Had I the good fortune to be the grandson of Moses Mendelssohn, I would not use my talents to set to music the Lamb's urine.") Yet if he, Heine, never engaged Judaism, neither did he ever quite give up on his Jewishness.

Throughout his life Heine struggled with religion. As a young man in Germany, he was a member of a group that called itself the Society for the Culture and Science of the Jews (*Verein fur Kulture und Wissenschaft der Juden*), which sought to preserve the Jewish heritage while joining it to modern science and enlightenment values. He was less a champion of Judaism than a strong advocate for Jewish civil rights.

Above all he hated anti-Semitism, which he described as that hatred of the Jews "on the part of the lower and higher rabble." The subject, if not the theme, of many of his middle and late period poems is the world's ignorance of anti-Semitism.

He despised the pressures of assimilation that Jews underwent to find acceptance in Germany. For all their backwardness, he found more to admire in the shtetl Jews of Poland than in the sadly assimilated but self-divided Jews of Germany, wearing the fashions of the day and quoting second-class writers, neither fully German nor fully Jewish. What Heine admired about the Polish Jews, and admired about Judaism generally, was that, unlike Greeks and Romans who clung to their soil and other peoples whose fealty was to their princes, the Jews "always clung to the Law, to the abstract idea...[to] the law as the highest principle," the Bible their "portable fatherland." Yet, whatever his sympathies for his people, he could not give himself over entirely to Judaism: "It would be distasteful and mean if, as people say of me, I had ever been ashamed of being a Jew, but it would be equally ridiculous if I ever claimed to be one."

As the enemy of all positive, of all organized, religions, Heine felt he could "never champion that religion which first introduced fault-finding with human beings that now causes us such pain; and if I nevertheless do it after a fashion, there are special reasons: tender emotions, obstinacy, and care to maintain an antidote." In his *Confessions*, he wrote that for years he failed to show his fellow Jews sufficient respect, blinded as he was by his partiality to Hellenic aestheticism: "I see now that the Greeks were only beautiful youths, but the Jews were always men, powerful, uncompromising men, not just in the days of old but right up to the present, despite 18 centuries of persecution and misery."

In Heine's search for the true religion, he rejected Christianity because, in its organized form, it "killed more joyous gods" and was "too sublime, too pure, too good for this earth." Besides, as he said, "no Jew can
Heine believed in the freedom and potential for happiness for all people. Yet he distrusted most of those people, the masses, whose utopia left no room for poets or poetry.

believe in the divinity of another Jew.” He believed that religions are “magnificent and admirable only when they have to compete with one another, and are persecuted rather than persecuting,” and that “a system of religion is as harmful to religion as to trade; [religions] remain alive only through free competition, and they will only return to their original splendor when political equality of worship is introduced—free trade in gods, as it were.”

Yet, as he wrote, “from my earliest years I saw how religion and doubt can live side by side without giving rise to hypocrisy.” Heine never claimed to be an atheist and referred, mockingly, to “the monks of atheism,” by which he meant those for whom atheism was a fanatical religion of its own. Late in life, laid low by his illness, he claimed to have found God, though he did so without the aid of organized religion. “The religious revolution that has taken place within me,” he wrote to his publisher Julius Campe, “is a purely intellectual one—more the product of thought than of beatific sentimentality, and my illness has a small share in it, I am sure.” As for the pain accompanying that illness, he wrote to his younger friend Hans Laube that “though I believe in God, I sometimes do not believe in a good God. The hand of this great animal baiter sometimes lies heavy on me.” He added still later that he would “bring charges with the SPCA against God for treating me so horribly.”

Moses, the lawgiver, is in Heine’s pantheon of heroes. So, too, is Martin Luther, that most German of Germans, “at once a dreamy mystic and a practical man of action” whose “thoughts had not merely wings but also hands; he spoke and acted.” Add another Moses, this one with the surname Mendelssohn, to the pantheon, who “overthrew the authority of Talmudism and founded pure Mosaism.” Then there was Goethe, who, as an artist, “holds the mirror up to nature, or, better, he is the mirror.”

These choices of heroes are dictated by Heine’s larger view of mankind. “I believe in progress,” he wrote in his History of Religion and Philosophy in Germany. “I believe that mankind is destined to be happy, and thus I think more highly of divinity than pious people who think mankind was created only to suffer. Here on earth, by the blessings of free political and industrial institutions, I should like to establish that bliss which, in the opinion of the pious, will come only in heaven, on the day of judgment.” This belief was perhaps more Jewish than Heine could have known. Heinz Graetz, the 19th-century historian of Judaism, wrote: “Judaism is not a religion of the present but of the future”—a future that “looks forward to the ideal age...when the knowledge of God and the reign of justice and contentments shall have united all men in the bonds of brotherhood.”

IN HIS EARLY YEARS, Heine himself saw the world in a battle between the senses and the spirit, and himself on the side of the senses. He was a free spirit, in the sense he himself defined it: a man “duty bound to engage seriously in the battle against evil that struts about so blatantly, and against the commonplace that swaggers insufferably.” As Pawel puts it, Heine “had always been rebel rather than revolutionary, nay-sayer rather than would-be prophet, [who] never for a moment shed his skepticism.”

Heine called himself a monarchical republican or, on alternate days, a republican monarchist. He believed in the freedom and potential for happiness for all people. Yet he distrusted most of those people, the masses, who were all philistines and whose utopia left no room for poets or poetry. Imagining a Communist society to come, he noted that “some grocer will use even the pages of my Book of Songs to wrap coffee and snuff for the old women of the future.” Always more precise about what he loathed than about what he loved; incapable of leading or of following any party; exile, poet, Jew, Heinrich Heine was the ultimate outsider.

Of literary works, Heine much admired Don Quixote. He recounts first reading Cervantes’s great novel as a young boy, unARMed in his reading by any awareness of the great Spanish writer’s irony, utterly saddened by the defeat after defeat suffered by the knight of the woeful countenance. Later, after he came to appreciate the irony, his love for the Don was undiminished and he came to view himself as a Don Quixote of his own day—but acting, as he put it, “from diametrically opposed points of view.” Heine writes:

My colleague mistook windmills for giants; I, on the contrary, see in our giants of today only
windmills; he mistook leather wineskins for mighty wizards; I see in our modern wizards only leather wineskins; he mistook every beggar’s inn for a castle—every donkey driver for a knight, every stable wench for a lady of the court—I, on the other hand, look upon our castles as disreputable inns, on our cavaliers as donkey drivers, on our court-ladies as common stable wenches. Just as he took a puppet-play to be a noble affair of state, I hold our affairs of state to be wretched puppet plays. But as doughtily as the doughty Knight of LaMancha I fall upon the wooden company.

Heine called Quixotism generally “the most precious thing in life.” A world filled only with Sanchos Panza, after all, would be one of unrelieved drabness, philistine, sensible but ultimately dull and dreary—whereas, in Heine’s words, “Quixotism lends wings to the whole world and to all in it who philosophize, make music, plough, and yawn.” They do not come along all that often, but when they do, authentic Quixotes reveal life's larger possibilities and thereby enliven its quality and enlarge its scope. On February 17, 1856, Heinrich Heine was removed from his mattress-grave to a dirt one at Montmartre Cemetery in Paris. Asked as he was dying if he wished to have a clergyman in attendance, he replied that none was required: “Dieu me pardonnera. C’est son métier.” He will always be among the small but indispensable band of Quixotes. Let the last words be in his own verse:

I am a German poet,  
In German lands I shine;  
And where great names are mentioned  
They're bound to mention mine.

"Wit, Exile, Jew, Convert, Genius : June 2018"
Chasing Hillary: Ten Years, Two Presidential Campaigns, and One Intact Glass Ceiling
By Amy Chozick
Harper, 400 pages

Reviewed by Daniel Halper

It wasn’t just Hillary Clinton who failed to secure a job on November 8, 2016. It was also her traveling press corps, a gang of reporters and journalists from myriad outlets assigned to cover the presumptive president’s every movement. Its members wouldn’t be going to the White House, either.

Among them was Amy Chozick, the New York Times’s beat reporter, who covered Clinton for a decade and had in mind a Georgetown fixer-upper to share with her habitually neglected husband, Bobby, after the Clinton win. From that failure and disappointment comes Chozick’s debut book, Chasing Hillary: Ten Years, Two Presidential Campaigns, and One Intact Glass Ceiling, an intimate journal that tracks the author’s rise from “fifth-generation Texan Jew” to her time at the Gray Lady, where she remains.

Chozick intertwines her own story with Clinton’s. Her childhood memories are meeting Hillary (“She seemed nice”), loving Bill (the then-president), and seeing herself in Chelsea (both braces-wearing, curly-haired Southerners of similar age). Her adult views are not too dissimilar.

It’s not only that she’s obsessed with her subject, though of course she is. Chozick is controlled by her. She recounts a gynecological visit she had three and a half years before the bitter Election Day loss. Heels resting in “cold metal stirrups,” she realizes her desire to bear children will have to wait. “It was Hillary Clinton vs. my ovaries.” Guess who won.

But while the Democratic presidential candidate controlled her reproductive life—and repeatedly caused her to stand up her husband—Chozick’s mental state throughout the campaign is in The Guys’ hands. That’s the author’s shorthand for Hillary’s male campaign handlers, who are manipulative, duplicitous, and misogynistic. Cumulatively, they are the abusive spouses Chozick cannot escape.

They are effective. Just as Clinton wanted. The Guys feed Chozick (turning her into a self-proclaimed “puppet”), starve her (depriving her of access and interviews for months and years at a time), and strong-arm her.

“You’ve got a target on your back,” The Guys repeatedly told her, apparently referring to some laughable conspiracy wherein the
Chasing Hillary is perhaps the most personally revealing memoir of the journalist-chasing-the-big-story-even-if-it-ruins-her-life genre—with references to the author’s youthful drug use (pot and mushrooms), ex-boyfriends (none apparently worthy of brags), job firing (stealing office supplies), and, of course, gynecological visits. Chozick’s criticisms of her profession are searing. Because in the end, the very exercise—the chase—is futile and self-indulgent.

“Traveling with the campaign meant I knew far less about what was happening inside the campaign than if I’d been back in New York working the phones or meeting sources in Brooklyn,” she writes, admitting to being a “captive stenographer” and that sometimes “the K-9 crew that sniffed our luggage logged a more productive day’s work.”

And yet Chozick is determined to be on the road and complains when her editors sideline her. “We were so fat and happy on the plane,” she writes, retelling the chartered flight’s lunch menu and what campaign reporters would order. “Quinoa Salad with Chicken (or Turkey)” for her, please. That seems to suit Chozick’s reporting-style. “Scoops are not my forte,” she admits. “I prefer lunch-based reporting.”

The most attention-grabbing chapter is titled “How I Became an Unwitting Agent of Russian Intelligence,” in which the author excoriates other reporters but mostly herself for writing about the hacked emails of Clinton campaign chair John Podesta, first published by WikiLeaks. Chozick says the six stories she wrote using the emails (out of 1,285 Clinton-related pieces) “tainted my entire body of work.”

Which might ring sincere if it were not for the fact that even now, a year and a half after the election, Chozick is still relying on those very emails. Indeed, she quotes from Podesta’s trove of emails frequently throughout her own book to add what would appear to be inside dope. Remarkably, in Chasing Hillary, she never attributes the stolen materials.

For instance, one of the major revelations in Podesta’s emails were paid speeches to Wall Street banks delivered by Hillary Clinton after she left the State Department but before she became a presidential candidate.

Chozick offers this paragraph:

Perusing Hillary’s paid speeches to Wall Street banks, Mandy Grunwald expressed her biggest concern. “The remarks below make it sound like HRC doesn’t think the game is rigged—only that she recognizes that the public thinks so,” she said. “They are angry. She isn’t.”

There is no reference, attribution, or footnote explaining the origin of Grunwald’s quotation in the WikiLeaks trove.

All of which makes Chasing Hillary feel like an opportunistic consolation prize for a reporter who must have set out to write a very different book—one that chronicled the election of the First Woman President.

There are two ways for a political reporter to find immediate success. The first is to expose, undermine, or bring down the politician to whom the reporter is assigned. The second, and more common, method is to ride the coattails of whomever you are assigned.

Chozick, by her own telling, is squarely in the second camp. “For three years, I’d been fighting with The Guys. I’d let my hero of a husband down. I’d put off having a baby. I’d thrown punches in the Steel Cage Match and gained at least twelve pounds. I’d even become an unwitting agent of Russian intelligence,” she writes.

“In the end, we all lost. I was done.”
Show Trial: Hollywood, HUAC, and the Birth of the Blacklist
By Thomas Doherty
Columbia University Press, 400 pages

Reviewed by Mark Horowitz

The House Committee on Un-American Affairs had a few blind spots. After all, it jailed the writer of Pride of the Marines but somehow missed the Rosenbergs. One of its co-chairmen was a world-class anti-Semite, while the other went to jail for financial corruption. So do we really need another account of the 1947 HUAC hearings, especially so soon after Glenn Frankel’s superb High Noon: The Hollywood Blacklist and the Making of An American Classic? Don’t we know enough already about the Beverly Hills Marxists who made up the Hollywood Ten? And HUAC’s essential claim—that the motion-picture industry was promoting subversive ideas before and during World War II—is preposterous. Tell it to Victor Lazlo. Casablanca and hundreds of other movies helped define the essential democratic values America was fighting for.

Yet Brandeis University historian Thomas Doherty proves there are still a few surprises, even after recent revisionist accounts exposed deeper ties than previously known between the Hollywood Ten and their Soviet controllers. In his fascinating Show Trial: Hollywood, HUAC, and the Birth of the Blacklist, Doherty doesn’t romanticize the Ten or try to justify the excesses of HUAC. Instead, he highlights a lesser-known aspect of the hearings: the dilemma of Hollywood centrists and liberals squeezed between the extremists on both sides. Like anti-Trump conservatives today, anti-Communist liberals in late 1940s Hollywood found that the middle could be a very lonely place.

In 1947, the Cold War had barely gotten started and the blacklist didn’t exist. Doherty shows how Hollywood’s top executives, too often painted as craven reactionaries, were fierce opponents of HUAC. And why wouldn’t they be? No self-respecting movie mogul wants to be told what films to make or whom to hire. And all the studio heads knew that many of the congressmen on the committee were publicity-hungry racists, former isolationists, and anti-Semites using Hollywood to tar the legacy of the New Deal. They were confident that they could handle Congress, just as they had in the past. (Six years earlier, a proto-version of HUAC dominated by isolationists accused Hollywood of un-American warmongering. Two months later, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor.)

During the 1947 hearings, the studio chief Jack Warner confidently admitted before the committee that he employed Communist writers so long as they kept their politics out of his films. When challenged about Mission to Moscow, the pro-Soviet propaganda film he made at the behest of the Roosevelt administration, Warner was indignant. “If producing Mission to Moscow in 1942 was a subversive activity,” he replied, “then the Liberty ships which carried food and guns to Russian allies and the American naval vessels that convoyed them were likewise engaged in subversive activities.”

Directors William Wyler, John Huston, and Billy Wilder, along with Humphrey Bogart, Lauren Bacall, and other stars, organized the Committee for the First Amendment (CFA) to oppose HUAC. Emboldened by a 1942 Supreme Court ruling that affirmed no government official “can proscribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion or other matters of opinion,” they were able to enlist hundreds of Hollywood celebrities to challenge the committee’s right to question anyone’s political affiliations.

The Committee for the First Amendment dominates Doherty’s account, not the House Committee on Un-American Affairs. “At once glamorous and grassroots, it would be the animating center of the campaign against HUAC from Hollywood’s besieged liberals,” he writes. By focusing on the story’s angels, rather than its monsters, the author separates himself from his predecessors as he charts the CFA’s noble but naïve conviction that it could defend a Communist’s right to free speech without defending Communism itself.

Hollywood liberals were hardly naïve about Communists. Before the war, they had worked alongside Communist Party members in the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, one of the largest and most successful Popular Front organizations of the period. But after the Hitler–Stalin
nonaggression pact in 1939, Moscow secretly ordered Party members to cease opposition to Hitler and promote isolationist policies instead. Many of the future Hollywood Ten, including screenwriters John Howard Lawson, Dalton Trumbo, and Lester Cole, shamelessly flip-flopped overnight and turned on their former allies, denouncing liberal colleagues as war-mongers and traitors.

Such hypocrisy and dishonesty were difficult to forget. Yet when CFA members flew to Washington in 1947, they put aside their misgivings, believing, as good liberals do, that freedom of expression and freedom of conscience demanded a stout defense. Weren’t these the very ideals Americans had just fought for?

At first, the argument seemed to be working. During the first days of the nationally broadcast hearings, following the testimony of the studio chiefs and the “friendly” witnesses, public opinion was trending against HUAC, something Doherty’s new research makes clear. But then the Hollywood Ten testified. The “unfriendlies” and their lawyers (three of whom were Party members as well) had devised a unified strategy. Asked if they were Communists, the Ten didn’t invoke the Fifth Amendment and refuse to answer; instead, they cheekily cited the First Amendment and replied with a barrage of prevarications and obfuscations.

Since HUAC was able credibly to document each witness’s party membership for the cameras and press, these obstreperous antics came across as evasive, not principled. They weren’t Democrats or Republicans; they really were Communists, and they were just trying to keep it secret, as required by the Communist Party at the time. If Moscow’s strategy was designed to turn the Hollywood Ten into martyrs, as many suspect, it worked. HUAC co-chairman J. Par- nell Thomas charged them with contempt of Congress, and all ten eventually did jail time. (That Parnell subsequently wound up in the same federal prison as Lawson and Cole is a third-act twist that still beggars belief.)

Bogart, Bacall, and fellow CFA members, seated in the hearing room in full view of the cameras, were unprepared for this testimony. They had foolishly hoped that the Ten would defy the committee by taking the Fifth, then publicly and honestly discuss their affiliations on the Capitol steps outside the committee’s purview. Instead, the CFA was now tied tightly to “unfriendlies,” who no longer seemed like a particularly sympathetic bunch to defend. A press report said that the visiting celebrities “were blind to how cynically the Communists had played them.” And it didn’t help that several of the Ten showed up just days later at a New York dinner in honor of a Soviet spy.

The hearings were a disaster for Hollywood liberals. One of the Ten, Ring Lardner Jr., said he overheard two women outside the hearing room discussing Bogart.

“He’s a Communist,” one said. “I won’t be going to any more of his movies.”

“No, he isn’t,” said the other. “He’s an anti-Communist.”

“I don’t care what kind of Communist he is,” the first replied. “I’m still not going to any more of his movies.”

Doherty methodically charts how, after the hearings, the movie community rapidly transitioned from “stiff-backed resistance to supine capitulation.” The American Legion threatened boycotts, and the studio chiefs were pressured by their bankers in New York. The same executives who publicly rejected a blacklist before the hearings unanimously agreed after the hearings to fire the ten “unfriendlies” and never again employ Communists. The CFA dissolved, and Bogart along with other celebrity opponents of HUAC were forced to make humiliating public apologies to preserve their careers.

Was the outcome inevitable? Was resistance to the new mood of the country futile? Doherty argues that Hollywood’s newfound maturity and cultural importance from 1939 to 1945 had raised its profile and made it a high-value target, especially when longstanding political divisions that World War II had suppressed were resurfacing. Republicans and conservative Democrats used HUAC to tarnish the New Deal. Hollywood right-wingers used HUAC to denounce old rivals on the left. And the Reds, on orders from Moscow, used HUAC to discredit democracy and prove that fascism was on the rise.

Doherty’s tragic conclusion is that Hollywood’s naive and idealistic liberals, caught between the Committee and the Comintern, never stood a chance.
A Man of His Century

Roads Not Taken:
An Intellectual Biography of
William C. Bullitt
By Alexander Etkind
University of Pittsburgh Press, 290 pages
Reviewed by Fred Siegel

WITH Russia back at the center of the 21st-century geopolitical map, it seems only fitting that a new biography of William Bullitt has just been published. Bullitt was in many ways the architect of America’s 20th-century relationship with the Soviet Union. Alexander Etkind’s Roads Not Taken: An Intellectual Biography of William C. Bullitt is an engrossing account of a Philadelphia blueblood who, though he grappled with Woodrow Wilson, Lenin, Freud, FDR, and Stalin, has largely been forgotten.

When Bullitt graduated from Yale University in 1912, he was voted the “most brilliant” in his class. His writing skills and family connections landed him a job with the Philadelphia Public Ledger. Bullitt’s talents won him an assignment in the midst of war-torn Europe, where his insights caught the eye of Colonel Edward House, political intimate and chief political adviser to President Woodrow Wilson. The 20th century, House predicted, would be the bloodiest in human history because of the ties between Russia, Germany, and Japan—a trio he described as “the league of...discontent.”

House took Bullitt under his wing, setting in motion the young man’s long and tumultuous connection with the USSR. In 1919, House made Bullitt part of Wilson’s team at the Paris Peace Accords. But in the midst of the negotiations over the future of Germany, the Russian Civil War broke out. It was a bloody conflict that would come to claim 25 million lives. But at the time it seemed to have reached a stalemate. Sensing an opening, House sent the 28-year-old Bullitt to Russia to meet with the 49-year-old Vladimir Lenin, who was for the moment badly outgunned by his rivals. After three days of negotiation, Lenin agreed to forgo Soviet claims to much of what had been Czarist Russia. But when Bullitt returned to Paris with a seeming triumph at hand, Wilson was sick and too ill-disposed to give Bullitt his attentions. In the interim, the Bolsheviks rallied, and the three days that might have shaken the world had passed. An angry Bullitt denounced Wilson as a mountebank and resigned from the diplomatic corps.

Disillusioned, Bullitt devoted much of the 1920s to writing. In 1925, the year F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote The Great Gatsby, Bullitt published It’s Not Done, a novel about the world that had been lost in WWI. While Gatsby sold 20,000 copies in 1925 and didn’t become a bestseller until the Depression, Its Not Done sold 150,000 copies in 1925 and went on to be largely forgotten. Woodrow Wilson: A Psychological Study, which Bullitt wrote with Sigmund Freud, has also been largely forgotten but for different reasons. A meld of Bullitt’s memories and Freud’s theories, the book’s publication was delayed by differences over the manuscript and by events in Europe. It was finally published in the 1960s, when psychobiography enjoyed a brief heyday. Perhaps Bullitt’s best claim to literary immortality comes courtesy of the Russian novelist Mikhail Bulgakov, who immortalized him in the character of Woland in his classic The Master and Margarita.

A HANDSOME contributor to FDR’s 1932 presidential campaign, Bullitt was connected to Roosevelt by way of Col. House. Both Bullitt and House believed that the failed 1919 mission to Lenin might yet be of use. In 1933, FDR became the first president to extend diplomatic recognition to the USSR and made Bullitt the first American ambassador to the Soviet Union. Bullitt arrived in Russia with a strongly philo-Soviet attitude.

Etkind, who teaches at the European University Institute in Florence, paints a colorful portrait of Bullitt’s time at Spaso House, the famously elegant American embassy in Russia. In Russia, Bullitt trained George Kennan and Chip Bohlen, the two most prominent Soviet specialists of the Cold War. Etkind quotes University of Pittsburgh Russianist Sean Guillroy, who said that “Bullitt’s embassy was one big frat party,” where beautiful ballerinas had numerous dalliances with the embassy staff, including the twice-divorced Bullitt. Despite the reality that the ballerinas were supplying Stalin with intelligence, Bohlen...
fondly remembered the situation. “I have never had more fun or interest in my whole life,” he said. “This embassy...is like no other embassy in the world.”

The Holodomor, Stalin’s mass murder of Ukrainian peasants, was already well under way. But the horrors of the regime came home to Spaso House only with the murder of Sergei Kirov, a prominent member of the Politburo who had been rumored to be a possible successor to Stalin. Kirov’s murder, probably ordered by Stalin, was the beginning of the Great Terror. The episode had a profound effect on Bullitt and Kennan, who came to place Hitler and Stalin in the same bracket. Marxism, as Bullitt was coming to see it, was merely a mask for a new version of Czarist cruelty. But despite Bullitt’s extensive correspondence with FDR describing the horrors of Stalinism, the president continued to have a positive view of the Soviet leader. In his last dispatch from Moscow, Bullitt wrote, “The Soviet Union is unique among the great powers. It is not only a state but also the headquarters of an international faith.” Bullitt’s criticisms of Stalin, explains Etkind, cost him FDR’s good will.

But before he left for his next diplomatic posting, which was to be in Paris, Bullitt held what was perhaps the most extraordinary diplomatic ball ever staged. It was a barely believable party for 500 guests, including the Soviet foreign and defense ministers. The affair implicitly mocked Stalinism with a re-creation of a collective farm complete with baby goats, roosters, a drunken bear (and a Czech jazz band). The revelers munched on duck-liver pâté while starvation spread throughout countryside. The scenes of revelry live on as the climactic Satan’s Ball scene in Bulgakov’s novel, but many of those who attended—including the Bolshevik luminary Nikolai Bukharin, legendary theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold, and the modernizer of the Red Army Mikhail Tuhachevsk—were tortured and murdered only a few year later in Stalin’s purges of the late 1930s. The party is still remembered in Moscow.

After Bullitt’s departure from Moscow, things changed considerably. Joseph Davies, Bullitt’s successor as ambassador, was a major contributor to FDR’s 1936 presidential campaign. He was a wealthy anti-trust lawyer who knew little of foreign policy and referred to Stalin as the kindly “Uncle Joe.” It was a view consistent with Roosevelt’s own misunderstandings.

Transferred to Paris, Bullitt offered his opinions freely to FDR’s emissary Harold Ickes. He foresaw that Mussolini would find Ethiopia a burden, Franco would win the Spanish Civil War, and “China would win battles but lose the war to Japan.” But, Etkind writes of Bullitt, “overestimating his beloved France, he thought the war could last 20 years in Europe.” Where he completely missed the boat was on England, where he thought that the fascist Oswald Mosley would have to be installed as prime minister if the island didn’t fall to Hitler.

Bullitt’s influence on France was unusual for a foreigner. He attended so many cabinet meetings that the press described him as a minister without portfolio. But consistent with his exalted sense of himself, he showered insights and advice on Roosevelt concerning the whole of Europe. Aviation, he claimed, was “the new element” that changed the rules of European security. “The modern bombing plane has confronted Europe with an alternative of unification or destruction.” Etkind also notes that “the idea of European unification was increasingly present in Bullitt’s dispatches from Paris before the war.” According to Bullitt himself: “These dinky little European states cannot live in an airplane civilization.” He feared that war “will mean such horrible suffering that it will end in general revolution, and the only winners would be Stalin and company.”

Bullitt used his ties with the French to good effect. He promoted the career of the young Jean Monnet, who would go on to become one of the founders of the European Union. And he used his French sources to convince FDR that Hitler was a madman with unlimited ambitions. When Soviet intelligence chief Walter Krivitsky defected to the West, he brought with him the revelation of the coming Nazi-Stalin alliance, realizing Bullitt’s worst fears. But although he also had information about Alger Hiss’s Communist connections, Bullitt could neither get Washington to listen to him nor protect Krivitsky, who was assassinated by Stalin’s agents in his Washington hotel room.

Bullitt repeatedly rubbed FDR the wrong way by importuning the president for a major post in the administration. And he was blocked professionally by his rival, Under Secretary of State Sumner Welles, an ally of Alger Hiss’s and a man who had described Mussolini as “the greatest man [I] ever met.” Denied a position he thought worthy of his talents, Bullitt resigned from the diplomatic service and joined the French army as a major. He fought under rugged conditions as an aide to General Jean de Latre Tassigny and demonstrated his courage by winning the Croix de Guerre and the Legion of Honour.

As the war wound down, Bullitt was increasingly critical of Roosevelt. He ultimately saw FDR as a
man who, like Woodrow Wilson, had won the war but lost the peace. FDR was, he argued, as weak at Yalta, physically and strategically, as Wilson had been at Paris. The UN, Bullitt maintained, left us powerless against the aggression of any “bandit great power.” But while Bullitt hurled imprecations in essays for *Life*, his protégé George Kennan, deputy head of mission in Moscow, had the eyes and ears of Secretary of State James Byrnes. In what became the famous February 1946 Long Telegram, Kennan crafted the argument that, according to Etkind, had “first been hammered out in extended discussions with Bullitt when they had been at Spaso House in Moscow.” Influenced by Bullitt, Kennan articulated what became known as the doctrine of containment:

> Marxism provided the Soviet Union with the...fig leaf of... moral and intellectual respectability. Without it they would stand before history, at best, as only the last of that long succession of cruel and wasteful Russian rulers who have relentlessly forced their country on to ever new heights of military power in order to guarantee external security of their internally weak regime.

Kennan channeled his thoughts and fears into a patient doctrine that called on countering the Kremlin when it attempted to expand. The more voluble Bullitt couldn’t remain as calm. He saw the growth of Communist parties in France and Italy as the imminent footfalls of doom. After an extraordinary career, he would never again rise to the heights of fame. “Unquestionably,” notes Kennan, “he deserved better of the country than he received from it....in the end of his life Bullitt became bitter...an unjustly frustrated man.”

The Rise of Victimhood Culture: Microaggressions, Safe Spaces, and the New Culture Wars
By Bradley Campbell and Jason Manning
Palgrave Macmillan, 278 pages

Reviewed by Claire Lehmann

In 2011, a group of University of Wyoming students created a Facebook group called “UW Crushes,” where they shared anonymous declarations of attraction to one another. The police were called to investigate when one anonymous poster wrote: “I want to hatef--k Meg Lanker Simons so hard That chick runs her liberal mouth all the time and doesn’t care who knows it. I think its [sic] hot and it makes me angry. One night with me and shes [sic] gonna be a good Republican bitch.” Students who were members of the group asked the group’s administrators to remove the post. But Lanker Simons objected: “Actually, I want this to stay up. This is disgusting, misogynistic, and apparently something the admins of this page think is a perfectly acceptable sentiment.” She continued: “Even if it is taken down, I’m left to wonder if there’s someone out there with a violent fantasy about me—and likely other wom-

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associated with each.

A dignity culture, they explain, has a set of moral values and behavioral norms designed to promote the idea that each human life possesses immutable worth. If an individual has been brutalized or exists at the bottom of a social pecking order, she still has human worth. In a dignity culture, children are encouraged to try their best and are taught aphorisms such as “sticks and stones make break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”

By contrast, in an honor culture, being on the bottom of a social pecking order is associated with great shame. Victims are tainted and often punished for bringing dishonor to their families. In some extreme circumstances, they may even be killed.

A victimhood culture departs from both by inverting their norms. On a university campus, for example, victims are not shamed but are instead fiercely protected, and now awarded status. This dynamic could be observed as early as 2015, in the reception to Emma Sulkowicz’s protest against a sexual assault she alleged had taken place. It consisted of her carrying her mattress around the Columbia University campus, including to class, under the condition that her accused rapist needed to be expelled in order for her to stop. For this performance, she was widely criticized, but she was also heralded as a feminist hero. The New York Times art critic Roberta Smith called it “succinct and powerful” and added that Sulkowicz has “set a very high standard for any future work she’ll do as an artist.” Although Columbia University and the New York Police Department failed to establish any wrongdoing on the part of the student Sulkowicz had accused, for art critics such as Smith, the accused student’s guilt was a fait accompli. That such awards and accolades might incentivize vexatious or false complaints in a student body seemed not to matter to adults in charge.

In the most disquieting chapter, Campbell and Manning predict that victimhood culture will eventually spread from elite colleges into the mainstream. In making this prediction, they note the significance of the fact that victimhood culture has emerged among the wealthiest schools in America. Oberlin and Brown, for example, have led the microaggression movement, while Claremont has been a pioneer in safe-space demands, microaggression protests, and the banning of speakers. They point out that the median family income at Middlebury College—where Charles Murray was shouted down and where his sponsoring professor, Alison Strange, was given whiplash injuries in a parking lot—was $240,000 per year. That income level is double that of Saint Louis University, where Murray spoke to an attentive audience. The book thus highlights a peculiar fact: The students most obsessed with their own oppression are some of the most pampered individuals in the world.

Unlike victimhood culture, dignity culture did not arise from pampered pupils at American schools and universities. It did not even originate with the upper classes. Campbell and Manning explain that it was first established in the class of yeoman farmers, master craftsmen, and artisans of Northern Europe. Since its members had goods to sell, they had a lot to gain from general tolerance of the foibles of others and a lot to lose from engaging in reckless violence. While the nobility continued to duel with swords, Europe’s growing middle classes developed cultures of commercial interdependence. When institutions such as courts matured and the authority of nobles was weakened, the upper classes adopted dignity culture as well. So while dignity spread upwards from the middle classes to the social elite, Campbell and Manning warn, victimhood culture will likely spread downwards from the social elites to the middle classes—as those wishing to be upwardly mobile will try to emulate upper-class moral norms.

While the culture is likely to spread downwards, it is also likely to inspire resentment. Campbell and Manning warn that the narratives of privilege deployed by the culture, which target white men in particular, are just as likely to inspire hostility as deference, especially in those who feel that they are unfairly targeted as oppressors:

If whites and males increasingly face a moral world divided between those who vilify them and those who glorify them, we should not be surprised if many find the latter more appealing than the former.... Here again, the backlash against victimhood may not necessarily advance the ideals of dignity, such as the moral equality of all people. Victimhood culture deviates from this moral equality by producing a moral hierarchy with white males at the bottom; the reaction it provokes may be the resurgence of a moral hierarchy that places them at the top.

Paradoxically, the backlash against political correctness is likely to make the situation worse. Conservatives are quickly learning to ape victimhood, too. The authors note that professional provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos “thrives on causing offense and controversy,” neither of which promotes a culture of dignity.

When Kevin Williamson was
fired from the *Atlantic*, Erick Erickson tweeted, “Kevin Williamson’s firing is a reminder that there are two Americas and one side will stop at nothing to silence the other.” Kurt Schlichter took it up another notch:

Never Trump, the public humiliation of Kevin Williamson demonstrates the indisputable fact...

You can side with the left and hope to be allowed to exist like a domesticates [sic] lap dog like David Brooks or Bret Stephens...

Or you can accept this is an existential fight and join us.

The logic of victimhood culture, then, is escalating grievance and retaliatory aggression. When slights cannot be neutralized with a dignified turn of the cheek, the prognosis looks grim.

What the purveyors of victimhood culture do not seem to grasp is that in weakening dignity, and in undermining the principles that deem all men and women to be moral equals, they unwittingly destroy the safeguards that prevent bad actors—such as hoaxers and narcissists—from climbing the social hierarchy through dishonesty and manipulation. In incentivizing weakness and reliance on third parties to intervene in disputes, students invite a paternalistic authoritarian apparatus to develop. While they seem comfortable with an authoritarian state on their university campus today, we should not be surprised if they demand an authoritarian state to police the citizenry tomorrow. The logical endpoint of a victimhood culture will not be a progressive utopia. On the contrary: The further this culture radiates outward, the more likely it will make victims of us all. ➤

**Normandy and Beyond, May–December 1944: The Churchill Documents, Volume 20**

Edited by Sir Martin Gilbert and Larry Arnn

The Hillsdale College Press, 2,576 pages

Reviewed by Andrew Roberts

**HILLSDALE College in Michigan has for many years now been undertaking the truly mammoth task of publishing every significant primary document relating to the life of Sir Winston Churchill, a project that is now finally nearing its end. The 20th volume of the series has been produced with the same scholarship, criteria for choice of material, meticulous footnoting, and attention to detail that have characterized all its predecessors. It takes its hero from May 1, 1944, five weeks before D-Day, to the end of that tempestuous year, as Churchill returned from strife-torn Athens after Christmas, having successfully put in place the military and political arrangements that saved Greece from Communism. Despite its monumental length, readers are unlikely to come across any of the book’s 2,576 pages without being awed at Churchill’s linguistic fluidity, clarity of thought and expression, sense of humor, foresight, sheer bloody-minded-ness, or capacity for impish mischief. Running through the entire length of the work is also a cold hatred of Hitler and the Nazis, who, at the volume’s end in December 1944, have just been stopped from breaking through to the River Meuse, as the Battle of the Bulge turns in the Allies’ favor.

The book is packed with Churchill’s love of unusual words and forceful expressions, many of which have never appeared in any previous biography of him. Writing to Anthony Eden, his foreign secretary, on May 7, for example, Churchill complained of the way the Special Operation Executive “arges in an ignorant manner into all sorts of delicate situations. They were originally responsible for building up the nest of cockatrices for [the Communist partisans] in Greece.” (“A cockatrice is a mythical, two-legged dragon or serpent-like creature with a cock’s head,” we are told in a footnote.)

On May 22, General Sir Hugh Tudor, who had served in Palestine, wrote to Churchill about an article in a New York Arabic newspaper proposing that Jerusalem be chosen as the seat of the new United Nations organization after the war. “It is pointed out that Palestine is one of the most central places in the world and therefore as suitable as any for this purpose,” Tudor told the prime minister. “It is also pointed out that Jerusalem is held sacred by the people of three great religions; so it would be best to internationalize it.” He added: “It would certainly disturb the Muslim world greatly if it were put under the Jews,” which probably explains why Churchill,
a convinced Zionist, declined to go into the issue with him.

“Give my love to Randolph should he come into your sphere,” Churchill wrote to Marshal Josip Tito on May 25. “I wish I could come myself but I am too old and heavy to jump out of a parachute.” Churchill hoped that Tito might be drawn into the Western rather than the Soviet sphere of influence after the war, and this volume sees him considerably hardening his attitude toward the Russians even two years before his Iron Curtain speech. “I have found it practically impossible to continue correspondence with them,” he told President Roosevelt of the Russian foreign minister, Vyacheslav Molotov. “But I note that after each very rude message they send to me, they have done pretty well what was asked. Although Molotov was most insulting about Romania, they have today told us they accept the broad principle that they take the lead in the Rumanian business and give us the lead in Greece.” He was constantly asking Roosevelt for tougher stances against Russia but rarely got them. “Do not hesitate to be blunt with these Russians when they become unduly truculent,” he told A.V. Alexander, the first lord of the admiralty, that month.

President Trump might benefit from reading Churchill’s note to General Sir Hastings “Pug” Ismay, his military secretary, of May 7, 1944: “I do not like press conferences, even off the record, on the eve of an important battle. I have recently been perturbed at reported statements from Naples, one in the Corriere, explaining that we are about to attack. Is it really necessary to tell the enemy this?”

One enemy of Churchill’s who is today considered a secular saint, Mohandas Gandhi, comes in for harsh treatment in these pages. “He is a thoroughly evil force,” Churchill wrote to Lord Wavell, the viceroy of India, “hostile to us in every fibre, largely in the hands of the native vested interests and frozen to his idea of the hand spinning-wheel and inefficient cultivation methods for the over-crowded population of India.” Churchill never saw Gandhi as anything other than a fraud. This volume contains President Roosevelt’s refusals to Churchill’s repeated requests for American shipping to transport Australian wheat to Bengal during the terrible famine there. “I regret exceedingly the necessity of giving you this unfavourable reply,” the President wrote on June 1. Those revisionist historians and journalists who attempt to blame Churchill for the famine and its aftermath should read this volume, which absolves him from their ahistorical and fundamentally ignorant attacks.

The deep divisions between Roosevelt and Churchill over their rival plans for assaults in the South of France and the Balkans are recorded in detail. The disputes ended with Roosevelt’s victory, to Churchill’s great chagrin, as privately expressed to friends such as Field Marshal Smuts in terms almost verging on the anti-American. Churchill’s pain and anger at the way the Warsaw Uprising failed to gain support from Stalin (referred to as “Uncle J” by FDR here) is also evident. Churchill asked Roosevelt to authorize the USAF to supply the Uprising, “landing if necessary on Russian airfields without their formal consent.” He added: “We would of course share full responsibility with you for any action taken by your Air Force.” Roosevelt merely replied a little later that “the problem of relief for the Poles in Warsaw has therefore unfortunately been solved by delay and by German action and there now appears to be nothing we can do to assist them.”

The assassination of Churchill’s friend Lord Moyne, his minister to the Middle East, by the Irgun Zvai Leumi underground movement in November 1944, tested his Zionism as never before, but the Cabinet minutes merely record, “The Prime Minister suggested that the Secretary of State for the Colonies should see Dr [Chaim] Weizmann and impress upon him that it was incumbent on the Jewish Agency to do all in their power to suppress these terrorist activities.” Even the murder of a close family friend of 40 years could not disturb his dreams for a Jewish national homeland.

The overall impression created by these volumes, which cover eight crucial months of World War II, is that Britain was extraordinarily fortunate to have a leader of the caliber of Winston Churchill to guide her destinies while V-1 and V-2 terror weapons were still landing on Britain, and the Nazis were still showing themselves to have a terrifyingly potent capacity for counterattack. We are also very lucky to have Hillsdale College devote the time, money, scholarship, and effort to build this magnificent memorial to him.
HOSE people up there in Washington, they think they know more than we do. They treat us like second-class citizens, like we’re dumb hicks, like we don’t know what’s going on.” That was the complaint of Reverend Ralph Patterson, who presides over a Protestant church in a small town of 3,000 people near the Gulf of Mexico. Patterson, who was one of the subjects interviewed by Robert Wuthnow in his new book, *The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Rural America*, also had a warning for his fellow Americans a few years ago: “I think they’re going to have a rude awakening up there in Washington in the next few years. People are just fed up. They want to put some other people up there that’s got some common sense.”

Wuthnow, a professor of sociology at Princeton who grew up in a small town in Kansas and has spent much of his career wisely observing the nation’s religious trends, has turned his attention in the past several years to rural life. His 2013 book, *Small-Town America: Finding Community, Shaping the Future*, was a dense academic study based on thousands of qualitative interviews with residents. *The Left Behind* is a shorter, less ambitious work that aims to look back on his previous research and determine whether or not he (or the rest of us) should have seen Trump coming. More broadly, Wuthnow tries to explain one part of America’s population to another.

Many have observed that the conceit of dividing America into Blue and Red states masks deep divisions between rural and urban populations inside those states. The result is that our cultural and media elite think that when they visit Kansas City they understand farmers in Missouri or when they spend time in Tulsa they understand factory workers in Oklahoma. Of course this ignorance works both ways. When a man I was interviewing in Little Rock found out that I lived in New York, he asked me if it was true that all New Yorkers are rude and eat a lot of hot dogs.

Wuthnow’s first observation about small towns is that they are “moral communities.” He explains: “I do not mean this in the vernacular sense of ‘moral’ as good, right, virtuous, or principled. I mean it rather in the more specialized sense of a place to which and in which people feel an obligation to one another and to uphold the local ways of being that govern their expectations about ordinary life and support their feelings of being at home and doing the right thing.”

When people who live in cities think about small towns, they often focus on the idea that everyone knows everyone else, that other people are in your business, that your past is never fully past because everyone around you remembers it. Of course this ignorance works both ways. When a man I was interviewing in Little Rock found out that I lived in New York, he asked me if it was true that all New Yorkers are rude and eat a lot of hot dogs.

Small-Town Clues

*The Left Behind: Decline and Rage in Rural America*  
By Robert Wuthnow  
Princeton, 192 pages

Reviewed by  
Naomi Schaefer Riley

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Commentary

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kids to get a college education, and those who do rarely come back. There are simply not enough opportunities for them.

People who do stay in small towns often have to curb their ambitions. Wuthnow notes, for instance, that when a couple inherits a family farm and moves back home, a woman (usually) will have to give up her career in the process. Wuthnow writes: “The interviews we conducted were interrupted frequently by people pausing to get a grip on their emotions as they described goals they knew they would never achieve and the attendant frustrations. They were on the whole content with the knowledge that life was what it was, whether that meant having given up a career, suffering from job loss or the failure of a farm, or growing old without children nearby.”

Even the churches that provide comfort and guidance to the people of rural America are emptying out. (Given Wuthnow’s interest in religion, one must assume the title of the book is a winking reference to the apocalyptic novel series Left Behind, a bestseller among evangelicals.)

There’s a certain melancholy that pervades these communities, and it seems a stark contrast to the kind of pioneering spirit one imagines was responsible for the founding of these towns. Of course there are economic factors that have led to this situation. But Wuthnow argues that what distinguishes small towns and what explains the way that they vote is largely the result of culture.

Residents of small towns are particularly anxious about the culture. “The odds of being against abortion under all circumstances with only the exception of rape or incest rises steadily as town sizes decreases.” Similarly, people in small towns find homosexuality to be immoral, though (as with the rest of America) as more and more people are likely to know someone who is gay, their opposition has waned. Rural Americans are not particularly concerned with what we might think of as traditional gender roles. Sure, women are often taking care of children and the elderly, but they may also be driving tractors and keeping the books for family businesses. Pragmatism usually wins out.

The cultural concern goes beyond hot-button social issues. Rural Americans feel that they have less control over the moral order of their communities than they once did. The Internet has brought the seediest aspects of urban life right into their homes. The scourge of drugs in these small towns has also left people feeling anxious—indeed more anxious than if they lived in a larger city because “a family moving away or a teenager on meth becomes a community problem, rather than only a personal one.” And individuals in a small town feel especially responsible. “You may not be affected personally but you are part of a failing community.”

This sense of personal responsibility has plenty of positive effects, such as the fact that there are likely to be many more voluntary organizations per capita in small towns than large ones. The value placed in small towns on self-reliance means not simply that people want to see their neighbors pulling themselves up by their bootstraps but also that there are plenty of ways they can get help. Wuthnow notes that people in small towns are much more likely to associate with one another across class lines than are people in cities. They attend the same schools and churches, and the lines between blue-collar and white-collar workers in farming and manufacturing are often blurred.

But what about other sorts of associations? Are rural Americans more likely to hold racist views? Certainly they are torn about the issue of immigration. While many welcome immigrants to towns where the population has been declining for some time, a clear majority wants more national restrictions on immigration. This was no doubt part of President Trump’s appeal to the rural population. Whether racism is a more serious problem in rural America than elsewhere, and whether that also led to Trump’s election, Wuthnow is not ultimately willing to say. He hears a lot of “implicit prejudice” in his interviews. People complain about “riffla” who were not “pulling their weight” in a town with a small population of poor blacks, for instance. Or they launch into invectives about President Obama’s being a socialist.

In a recent “interview” with the website Vox, Wuthnow’s interlocutor lectured him: “We can talk all we like about the sanctity of these small communities and the traditional values that hold them together, but, as you say, many of the people who live in these places hold racist views and support racist candidates and we can’t accommodate that.” Wuthnow does not suggest accommodating such views, but he does suggest that these views alone are an incomplete picture of rural America. “My message for fellow academics and ‘producers of knowledge’ in the liberal elite is that rural America is not crazy.” He goes on: “Some of them participate in rallies where people scream invectives at Democrats and the media. Some of them publicly condone racial slurs and homophobia. Most of them do not. Their outrage is quieter. It remains hidden most of the time.” But after 2016, we can’t be surprised by it anymore.
How Do You Solve a Problem Like Oscar Hammerstein?

Of all the Broadway musicals written between the consolidation of the genre in the early ’20s and the start of its decline in the mid-’60s, only 20 or so are now revived regularly. Five of them—Oklahoma! (1943), Carousel (1945), South Pacific (1949), The King and I (1951), and The Sound of Music (1959)—feature lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II and music by Richard Rodgers, while a sixth, Show Boat (1927), was written by Hammerstein and Jerome Kern. Hammerstein also wrote the books for five of these shows (the exception is The Sound of Music), and those librettos define to this day how a “normal” musical is constructed. He is thus by definition the most important and influential figure in the history of musical comedy.

No one questions Hammerstein’s historical significance, nor does the popularity of these six musicals show any sign of diminishing. But there is a gap between that popularity and the esteem in which he is held by many critics. Kenneth Tynan summed up the conventional wisdom about the alleged sentimentality and naiveté of Hammerstein’s work when he dismissed The Sound of Music as “a show for children of all ages, from six to about eleven and a half.” Stephen Sondheim, Hammerstein’s protégé, put it more forgivingly when he described him as “easy to make fun of because he is so earnest.”

Hammerstein affected to be unfazed by such criticisms. “In my book,” he told Mike Wallace in a 1958 TV interview, “there’s nothing
wrong with sentiment because the things we're sentimental about are the fundamental things in life, the birth of a child, the death of a child or of anybody, falling in love." Yet they continue to be made, if less often today than in the past, and Todd S. Purdum engages directly with them in *Something Wonderful: Rodgers and Hammerstein's Broadway Revolution*, an introduction to the lives and work of Rodgers and Hammerstein. Its first chapter is actually titled “The Sentimentalist.”* But Purdum is a political journalist, not a student of theater, and his book neither breaks new biographical ground nor offers fresh insights into the interior lives of its subjects. It is hard to see for whom *Something Wonderful* was written other than readers who know nothing whatsoever about either man, nor does it seem likely that its publication will have any discernible effect on their reputations, critical or otherwise.

About Rodgers’s reputation, of course, there is no doubt. Long before he ended his partnership with Lorenz Hart and started writing with Hammerstein, he was universally regarded as having (in the words of Leonard Bernstein) “established new levels of taste, distinction, simplicity in the best sense, and inventiveness” in popular song. But what about his second collaborator? Will Oscar Hammerstein be remembered merely as a shrewd craftsman who knew what the public wanted and gave it to them? Or will he be seen as a giant in his own right?

Hammerstein called himself “a strange man,” and while that is an exaggeration, his personality was far from simple. Born in New York in 1895, he was the oldest son of a mixed marriage (his father was a fully assimilated second-generation German Jew, his mother a Presbyterian Scot) and carefully steered clear throughout his career of subject matter indicative in any way of his Jewish background, though he made no attempt to conceal it. He broke up his first marriage after falling in love at first sight with another man’s wife, leading to a union that was not merely successful but all-consumingly so: He reserved his emotions for Dorothy, his second wife, treating his children in a distantly, often aggressively competitive manner and running his professional life in much the same way. Adored by his friends, he was seen by his colleagues as a canny and ruthless businessman who could be, as the director Joshua Logan put it, “tough as nails.”

It was Hammerstein’s own theatrical family—his father was a vaudeville producer, his paternal grandfather an opera impresario—that determined his destiny. He started writing for the stage in college, teaming up with the composers Rudolf Friml, Otto Harbach, and Sigmund Romberg to create European-style operettas. Even then, he sought to create shows whose songs were firmly rooted in their dramatic action, and he also longed to junk the fluffy plots that dominated the genre. But Hammerstein had no knack for coming up with original storylines, and it was not until he started adapting preexisting source material that he found himself as an artist.

Seven years after Hammerstein’s first Broadway show opened, he and Jerome Kern wrote *Show Boat*, a stage version of Edna Ferber’s bestselling 1926 novel and the first musical in which serious subjects (among them murder and miscegenation) were treated on stage. But the success of its original production, which ran for a year and a half, failed to persuade other producers that theatergoers were eager to embrace similar fare, and while several of the later songs that Hammerstein wrote with Kern, including “All the Things You Are” and “The Song Is You,” became standards, he wrote no hit shows between 1932 and 1943.

Hammerstein then teamed up with Rodgers, whose long-standing collaboration with Lorenz Hart had been derailed by Hart’s alcoholism. It had already run its course in any case, for Hart was incapable of writing the books for his own shows, and he and Rodgers, both of whom longed to do more challenging work on Broadway, found it impossible as a result to realize their shared ambitions. When Rodgers invited Hammerstein to work on a musical version of Lynn Riggs about pioneer life in what would become the state of
Oklahoma, Hammerstein accepted with alacrity.

By then he had long since perfected his lyric-writing style, turning out songs that were noteworthy for their seemingly effortless combination of frank emotionalism and directness of utterance (“Why was I born? / Why am I living?”). To this he now added an increased determination to do again what he and Kern had already done so well in *Show Boat*, writing an entire show in which the emotional stakes are involvingly high and every musical number is painstakingly integrated into the show’s dramatic arc, propelling it forward instead of standing apart from it.

To this end, Rodgers and Hammerstein broke with Broadway tradition by reversing the order in which they wrote their songs. Instead of setting his lyrics to Rodgers’s preexisting tunes, Hammerstein usually wrote them first, after which Rodgers set them to music. This made it easier for them to break free from the rigid formal strictures of repeating-chorus “golden age” popular song, and it also allowed Hammerstein to plunge further into his own deep well of feeling, thereby encouraging Rodgers to write music more expansive than the brilliant show tunes to which Hart had previously set his lyrics. In addition, Hammerstein shunned his predecessor’s elaborate wordplay, opting for straightforwardness (“I can see the stars gittin’ blurry / When we ride back home in the surrey”) over Hart’s self-conscious virtuosity (“I’m wild again! / Beguiled again! / A simpering, whimpering child again”).

Hammerstein looked to his source material not just for song cues but for actual inspiration as well. Consider Riggs’s opening stage direction of *Green Grow the Lilacs*:

> It is a radiant summer morning, the kind of morning which, enveloping the shapes of earth—men, cattle in the meadow, blades of the young corn, streams—makes them seem to exist now for the first time, their images giving off a visible golden emanation.

In addition to yielding up the lyrics of “Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin’,” which describe “a bright, golden haze on the meadow” and corn that “looks like it’s climbin’ clear up to the sky,” this passage gave Hammerstein the idea to start *Oklahoma!* not with the customary rousing full-ensemble chorus but with the plainest of stage pictures, a lone woman churning butter while a cowboy is heard singing offstage. Here as elsewhere, he shook off the tired conventions of the musicals of the ’20s and ’30s, preferring emotional force to fizzy frivolity (*Oklahoma!* hinges on the sexual awakening of one character and the killing of another) and designing a tightly knit structural template in which each successive song pushes the show inexorably closer to its climax.

Aside from the shows themselves, it is this formal template that is Hammerstein’s chief contribution to the American musical. Virtually every Broadway musical to have held the stage since 1943 has been structured in a way similar to that of *Oklahoma!* Shortly before *Oklahoma!* opened, Hammerstein told his son that it was “different [from] and higher in its intent” than other musicals. The same was true of *Carousel*, an Americanized version of Ferenc Molnár’s 1909 play *Liliom* that contains what Sondheim calls “the single most important moment in the revolution of contemporary musicals.” Sondheim is referring to the “bench scene,” a 12-minute-long near-operatic *scena* during which the show’s two principal characters discover and reveal their love for each other in an exquisitely sustained melding of speech and song:

> “If I loved you, / Words wouldn’t come in an easy way— / Round in circles I’d go!”

Except for George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* (1935), which was conceived as a full-scale grand opera, no previous Broadway show had contained so ambitious and completely realized a piece of music drama. It has to be said that the flawless first act of *Carousel* is followed by a finale in which Hammerstein comes perilously close to letting genuine sentiment spill over

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* For a detailed discussion of Hammerstein’s formal innovations, see my “Why Musicals Succeed” (*Commentary*, March 2016).

** A kinescope of a 1954 telecast in which the “bench scene” is performed by Jan Clayton and John Raitt, who created the leading roles in the original production of *Carousel*, can be viewed on YouTube.
into sticky sentimentality, above all in “You’ll Never Walk Alone,” which is invariably cited by those who dislike his work (“At the end of the storm is a golden sky, / And the sweet silver song of a lark”). Even so, it still brings Carousel to a dramatically convincing close when sung and staged with disciplined understatement.

The hallmark of Carousel and Oklahoma! is their untragic idealism, which is central to their mass appeal. They embody a quintessentially American vision of life, one in which the inescapable pain and suffering of human existence—not excluding violent death—can be ameliorated by the power of love. Nor was this vision insincere, at least in Hammerstein’s case (Rodgers’s personality was more opaque). He described himself as “one-third realist and two-thirds mystic,” and every word he wrote came straight from the heart. When he urged Sondheim not to imitate him, he said, “Don’t write what I feel. I really believe all this stuff. You don’t.” Had he not believed it, he could never have written “If I Loved You,” which Rodgers set to a melody (it is no mere tune) of Tschaikovskian amplitude that is worthy of his partner’s wholly felt words.

Having charted the future course of the American musical, Hammerstein longed to try something new. But his desire to keep on innovating exceeded his ability to do so, as he proved with Allegro.

The two men then returned to form with South Pacific and The King and I, whose scores are splendently beautiful, though both shows, South Pacific in particular, are marred by Hammerstein’s obtrusive liberal didacticism: “You’ve got to be taught before it’s too late / Before you are six or seven or eight / To hate all the people your relatives hate.” (Rodgers himself admitted in 1968 that Hammerstein’s “one fault” was that he was “too preachy.”) Nevertheless, they continue to be revived, not merely because of the quality of their songs but also because of the sureness of Hammerstein’s dramatic carpentry.

The duo’s first four hits seem to have exhausted their powers of creative renewal, for they were followed by two forgotten flops, Me and Juliet (1953) and Pipe Dream (1955), and the commercially successful but now irretrievably dated Flower Drum Song (1958). By then, their energies were being diverted into the production of overblown widescreen film versions of their stage shows.

While they scored two more successes with The Sound of Music and a TV version of Cinderella (1957), neither is comparable in artistic quality to its predecessors, in part because Hammerstein, who was already suffering from the stomach cancer that killed him in 1960, turned over the task of writing the book of the former show to Howard Lindsay and Russel Crouse. These old pros yielded to the temptation to indulge in the florid sentimentality of which Hammerstein had mostly steered clear and to which he now succumbed in some of his own lyrics, the last he ever wrote. The colosal success of The Sound of Music (and its 1965 film version) cemented his posthumous reputation as a merchant of kitsch, and it was taken for granted decades after his death that all his musicals had become period pieces.

Yet Hammerstein’s songs and shows continued to be sung and staged, and a dark-hued 1992 Royal National Theatre revival of Carousel brought about a critical reevaluation of his work whose effects have proved to be lasting. Today he is generally acknowledged as a major figure, and only blinkered snobs now feel the need to apologize for appreciating his best work with both Rodgers and Kern, much less for admiring the dramaturgical innovations that, in Stephen Sondheim’s words, “changed the texture of the American musical theater forever.” He is, in fact, one of America’s greatest and most characteristic artists, a genius whose open-eyed optimism is a reflection of our national character as it once was and may yet be.
DONALD TRUMP had been president for just a little more than a week, but Francine Prose was ready for him to go. On January 30, 2017, the novelist published her call to action in the pages of the Guardian. “I believe that what we need is a nonviolent national general strike of the kind that has been more common in Europe than here,” she wrote.

Online activists loved the idea. The #NationalStrike hashtag began to trend on Twitter. David Simon, the television writer, garnered additional publicity when he tweeted, “If you believe in America, show it by refusing to work on the Friday before President’s Day, Feb. 17. Let them know.” His post was re-tweeted thousands of times.

When the day arrived, protesters gathered in several major cities. They carried signs, chanted slogans. But the strike was a flop. If anyone did refuse to work, no one paid attention. Life went on. Trump, as you may have noticed, remains president.

Yet plenty of Trump’s opponents, and the media in which they appear, continue to believe that his resignation is imminent, that some looming insinuation, accusation, revelation, or betrayal is about to drive him from the White House. For these people, Trump is forever on the verge of being delegitimized, laid low, brought down.

Indeed, the phrase “bring down Trump” appears in the headlines again and again, as if the words themselves hold the power to end his reign. Since Trump took office, reporters, editors, and commentators—not to mention the readers who gobble this up—have been searching for a messiah who will herald the end of the 45th presidency, who will save America from itself.

The list of potential saviors is long. It is also subject to revision. For example, on February 3, 2017, Politico magazine asked, “Will this man take down Donald Trump?” The man in question was then—New York state attorney general Eric Schneiderman, the “slender, slightly built former corporate lawyer, the only son of a New York philanthropist whose last name adorns several city cultural institutions,” who also “has a record of going not only after Trump, but going after people now in Trumpworld.” And going after women he is dating, according to the New Yorker, whose account of Schneiderman’s verbal and physical abuse of girlfriends led to his resignation on the evening of May 7, 2018.

The ongoing investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election has dogged the Trump presidency since the beginning and provided multiple opportunities for Trump’s critics to speculate, loudly and without any evidence, that he won’t survive its outcome. “If true, this CNN report about Russia could destroy Trump’s presidency,” wrote Alex Shepard of the New Republic in the spring of 2017. The CNN report, published on March 23, 2017, said, “The FBI has information that indicates associates of President Donald Trump communicated with suspected Russian operatives to possibly coordinate the release of information damaging to Hillary Clinton’s campaign.” It was a bombshell—one that, at this writing, has not been substantiated.

On May 2, 2017, GQ published an interview with Michael Moore headlined, “Michael Moore’s Master Plan to Bring Down Donald

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On June 5, 2017, Lawrence O'Donnell said that, by allowing former FBI director James Comey to testify to Congress, Donald Trump “destroyed his presidency.” O'Donnell went on: “The video you’re about to see might be the video that we’re showing you years from now when we’re pinpointing the beginning of the end of the Trump presidency.”

The video was of White House press secretary Sarah Sanders telling the public that Trump would not claim executive privilege in relation to Comey. In subsequent months, the former FBI director testified, wrote a book, and embarked on a major publicity tour. Among the things Comey may have “destroyed” in the process was his own reputation.

Plenty of Trump associates have been swept up in the Russia investigation, to be sure. And every time one of them cops a plea or submits to questioning, Trump's adversaries declare that the jig is up, that the paddy wagon is on its way to 1600 Pennsylvania. On December 1, 2017, when Michael Flynn pleaded guilty to misleading investigators, Chris Matthews said, “Michael Flynn is going to be the most important American besides Donald Trump in the next several months because he may well bring down Donald Trump.”

Flynn has a lot of competition for the role. “The end of his presidency”: John Dean says Rick Gates’s testimony could bring down Trump for good," tweeted RawStory.com when the former campaign official turned state's evidence. "Prediction: I'm calling it now," tweeted MSNBC contributor Scott Dworkin. “Roger Stone will bring down Donald Trump.” Former Obama aide Jesse Lee tweeted, “What Manafort knows might be able to bring down Trump and his whole family.” Defense attorney Joey Jackson said on CNN, “If the end game is to squeeze [Michael] Cohen, who knows so much about Trump, boy, that could bring down the Trump presidency.”

Note the frequent use of “might” and “could,” the way these pundits hedge their bets, titillating their audience with the possibility of Trump's collapse while maintaining (in their view) credibility. In this way, the departure of a Trump staffer from the White House becomes the occasion for hypothetical pieces about presidential betrayal and arrest.

On January 19, 2018, for example, Stephen A. Crockett Jr. wrote on TheRoot.com, "If the rumors [prove true] that former White House worker (or President Donald Trump's personal Diet Coke getter) Omarosa Manigault Newman secretly recorded private conversations she had during her short White House stay, then I hate to say this—it actually pains me to say this—but Omarosa might be our only hope to bring down the White House.” The headline for Tina Nguyen's February 1, 2018, piece on VanityFair.com read, “Could Hope Hicks be the one to bring down Trump?”

Life lesson: If all you've got is Omarosa, you might want to rethink things.

Rod Rosenstein, Michael Wolff, Tom Steyer, Adam Schiff—all have been portrayed as the Trumpslayer, the agent of presidential demise. The most recent and sensational claimants to the title are Stephanie Clifford, aka Stormy Daniels, and her telegenic attorney Michael Avenatti. “If for some reason Mueller does not get him, Stormy will,” Maxine Waters told Joy Reid during a March 11 phone interview. A March 12 Rolling Stone article purported to explain “How the Stormy Daniels Scandal Could Bring Down Trump.”

On March 16, Donny Deutsch agreed: If Stormy Daniels really had been threatened with violence for telling her story, then “that in and of itself could bring down this presidency.” On May 3, Stephen Colbert opened the Late Show by saying: “My next guest has helped turn a civil dispute with a porn star into an existential threat to the Trump presidency. Please welcome Michael Avenatti!”

And so the Resistance has descended the winding staircase from People Power to porn stars, from Robert Mueller to Michael Avenatti. Who will be next to join the ranks of false media messiahs? No doubt the answer will surprise us. “Could an Army of Accountants Bring Down Trump?” asked a recent headline.

What caught my eye was the place where this article appeared. So desperate are they to overturn the results of the 2016 election, it would seem, that the editors of the Nation are willing—if only grudgingly—to embrace bean counters.\[4\]
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